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MR. WOOD OFFERS TO ADOPT LITTLE JACK SHEPPARD

JACK SHEPPARD

A ROMANCE

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH

Author of "The Tower of London," "Guy Fawkes," "Windsor Castle," etc.

COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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JACK SHEPPARD.

Epoch the First.

1703.

JONATHAN WILD.

CHAPTER I.

THE WIDOW AND HER CHILD.

On the night of Friday, the 26th of November, 1703, and at the hour of eleven, the door of a miserable habitation, situated in an obscure quarter of the Borough of Southwark, known as the Old Mint, was opened; and a man, with a lantern in his hand, appeared at the threshold. This person, whose age might be about forty, was attired in a brown double-breasted frieze coat, with very wide skirts, and a very narrow collar; a light drugget waistcoat, with pockets reaching to the knees; black plush breeches; gray worsted hose; and shoes with round toes, wooden heels, and high quarters, fastened by small silver buckles. He wore a three-cornered hat, a sandy-colored scratch wig, and had a thick woolen wrapper folded round his throat. His clothes had evidently seen some service, and were plentifully begrimed with the dust of the work-

shop. Still he had a decent look, and decidedly the air of one well-to-do in the world. In stature, he was short and stumpy; in person, corpulent; and in countenance, sleek, snub-nosed, and demure.

Immediately behind this individual, came a pale, poverty-stricken woman, whose forlorn aspect contrasted strongly with his plump and comfortable physiognomy. She was dressed in a tattered black stuff gown, discolored by various stains, and intended, it would seem, from the remnants of rusty crape with which it was here and there tricked out, to represent the garb of widowhood, and held in her arms a sleeping infant, swathed in the folds of a linsey-woolsey shawl.

Notwithstanding her emaciation, her features still retained something of a pleasing expression, and might have been termed beautiful, had it not been for that repulsive freshness of lip denoting the habitual dram-drinker; a freshness in her case rendered the more shocking from the almost livid hue of the rest of her complexion. She could not be more than twenty; and though want and other suffering had done the work of time, had wasted her frame, and robbed her cheek of its bloom and roundness, they had not extinguished the luster of her eyes, nor thinned her raven hair. Checking an ominous cough, that ever and anon convulsed her lungs, the poor woman addressed a few parting words to her companion, who lingered at the doorway as if he had something on his mind, which he did not very well know how to communicate.

"Well, good-night, Mr. Wood," said she, in the deep, hoarse accents of consumption; "and may God Almighty bless and reward you for your kindness! You were always the best of masters to my poor husband; and now you've proved the best of friends to his widow and orphan boy."

"Poh! poh! say no more about it," rejoined the man hastily. "I've done no more than my duty, Mrs. Sheppard, and neither deserve nor desire your thanks. 'Whoso giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord;' that's my comfort. And such slight relief as I can afford should have been offered earlier, if I'd known where you'd taken refuge after your unfortunate husband's——"

"Execution, you would say, sir," added Mrs. Sheppard, with a deep sigh, perceiving that her benefactor hesitated to pronounce the word. "You show more consideration to the feelings of a hempen widow, than there is any need to show. I'm used to insult as I am to misfortune, and am grown callous to both; but I'm *not* used to compassion, and know not how to take it. My heart would speak if it could, for it is very full. There was a time—long, long ago—when the tears would have rushed to my eyes unbidden at the bare mention of generosity like yours, Mr. Wood; but they never come now. I have never wept since that day."

"And I trust you will never have occasion to weep again, my poor soul," replied Wood, setting down his lantern, and brushing a few drops from his eyes, "unless it be tears of joy. Pshaw!" added he, making an effort to subdue his emotion, "I can't leave you in this way. I must stay a minute longer, if only to see you smile."

So saying, he re-entered the house, closed the door, and, followed by the widow, proceeded to the fireplace, where a handful of chips, apparently just lighted, crackled within the rusty grate.

The room in which this interview took place had a sordid and miserable look. Rotten, and covered with a thick coat of dirt, the boards of the floor presented a very insecure footing; the bare walls were scored all over with grotesque designs, the chief of which represented the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar. The rest were hiero-

glyphic characters, executed in red chalk and charcoal. The ceiling had in many places given way; the laths had been removed; and, where any plaster remained, it was either mapped and blistered with damps, or festooned with dusty cobwebs. Over an old crazy bedstead was thrown a squalid, patchwork counterpane; and upon the counterpane lay a black hood and scarf, a pair of bodice of the cumbrous form in vogue at the beginning of the last century, and some other articles of female attire. On a small shelf near the foot of the bed stood a couple of empty phials, a cracked ewer and basin, a brown jug without a handle, a small tin coffee-pot without a spout, a saucer of rouge, a fragment of looking-glass, and a flask, labeled "*Rosa Solis.*" Broken pipes littered the floor, if that can be said to be littered, which, in the first instance, was a mass of squalor and filth.

Over the chimneypiece was pasted a handbill, purporting to be "*The last Dying Speech and Confession of* TOM SHEPPARD, *the Notorious Housebreaker, who suffered at Tyburn on the 25th of February*, 1703. This placard was adorned with a rude woodcut, representing the unhappy malefactor at the place of execution. On one side of the handbill a print of the reigning sovereign, Anne, had been pinned over the portrait of William the Third, whose aquiline nose, keen eyes, and luxuriant wig, were just visible above the diadem of the queen. On the other, a wretched engraving of the Chevalier de Saint George, or, as he was styled in the label attached to the portrait, James the Third, raised a suspicion that the inmate of the house was not altogether free from some tincture of Jacobitism.

Beneath these prints, a cluster of hobnails, driven into the wall, formed certain letters, which, if properly deciphered, produced the words, "*Paul Groves, cobler;*" and under the name, traced in charcoal, appeared the follow-

ing record of the poor fellow's fate, "*Hung himsel in this rum for luv off licker;*" accompanied by a graphic sketch of the unhappy suicide dangling from a beam. A farthing candle, stuck in a bottle-neck, shed its feeble light upon the table, which, owing to the provident kindness of Mr. Wood, was much better furnished with eatables than might have been expected, and boasted a loaf, a knuckle of ham, a meat-pie, and a flask of wine.

"You've but a sorry lodging, Mrs. Sheppard," said Wood, glancing round the chamber, as he expanded his palms before the scanty flame.

"It's wretched enough, indeed, sir," rejoined the widow; "but, poor as it is, it's better than the cold stones and open streets."

"Of course—of course," returned Wood, hastily; "anything's better than that. But take a drop of wine," urged he, filling a drinking-horn and presenting it to her; "it's choice canary, and 'll do you good. And now, come and sit by me, my dear, and let's have a little quiet chat together. When things are at the worst, they'll mend. Take my word for it, your troubles are over."

"I hope they are, sir," answered Mrs. Sheppard, with a faint smile and a doubtful shake of the head, as Wood drew her to a seat beside him; "for I've had my full share of misery. But I don't look for peace on this side the grave."

"Nonsense!" cried Wood; "while there's life there's hope. Never be down-hearted. Besides," added he, opening the shawl in which the infant was wrapped, and throwing the light of the candle full upon its sickly, but placid features, "it's sinful to repine while you've a child like this to comfort you. Lord help him! he's the very image of his father. Like carpenter, like chips."

"That likeness is the chief cause of my misery," replied the widow, shuddering. "Were it not for that, he

would indeed be a blessing and a comfort to me. He never cries nor frets as children generally do, but lies at my bosom, or on my knee, as quiet and as gentle as you see him now. But, when I look upon his innocent face, and see how like he is to his father—when I think of that father's shameful ending, and recollect how free from guilt *he* once was—at such times, Mr. Wood, despair will come over me; and, dear as this babe is to me, far dearer than my own wretched life, which I would lay down for him any minute, I have prayed to Heaven to remove him, rather than he should grow up to be a man, and be exposed to his father's temptations—rather than he should live as wickedly and die as disgracefully as his father. And when I have seen him pining away before my eyes, getting thinner and thinner every day, I have sometimes thought my prayers were heard."

"Marriage and hanging go by destiny," observed Wood, after a pause; "but I trust your child is reserved for a better fate than either, Mrs. Sheppard."

The latter part of this speech was delivered with so much significance of manner, that a bystander might have inferred that Mr. Wood was not particularly fortunate in his own matrimonial connections.

"Goodness only knows what he's reserved for," rejoined the widow in a desponding tone; "but if Mynheer Van Galgebrok, whom I met last night at the Cross Shovels, spoke the truth, little Jack will never die in his bed."

"Save us!" exclaimed Wood. "And who is this Van Gal—Gal—what's his outlandish name?"

"Van Galgebrok," replied the widow. "He's the famous Dutch conjurer who foretold King William's accident and death, last February but one, a month before either event happened, and gave out that another prince over the water would soon enjoy his own again; for which

he was committed to Newgate, and whipped at the cart's tail. He went by another name then,—Rykhart Scherprechter I think he called himself. His fellow-prisoners nicknamed him the gallows-provider, from a habit he had of picking out all those who were destined to the gibbet. He was never known to err, and was as much dreaded as the jail-fever in consequence. He singled out my poor husband from a crowd of other felons; and you know how right he was in that case, sir."

"Ay, marry," replied Wood, with a look that seemed to say, that he did not think it required any surprising skill in the art of divination to predict the doom of the individual in question; but, whatever opinion he might entertain, he contented himself with inquiring into the grounds of the conjurer's evil augury respecting the infant. "What did the old fellow judge from, eh, Joan?" asked he.

"From a black mole under the child's right ear, shaped like a coffin, which is a bad sign; and a deep line just above the middle of the left thumb, meeting round about in the form of a noose, which is worse," replied Mrs. Sheppard. "To be sure, it's not surprising the poor little thing should be so marked; for, when I lay in the women-felons' ward in Newgate, where he first saw the light, or at least such light as ever finds entrance into that gloomy place, I had nothing, whether sleeping or waking, but halters, and gibbets, and coffins, and such like horrible visions, forever dancing round me! And then, you know, sir—but, perhaps, you don't know that little Jack was born a month before his time, on the very day his poor father suffered."

"Lord bless us!" ejaculated Wood, "how shocking! No, I did *not* know that."

"You may see the marks on the child yourself, if you choose, sir," urged the widow.

"See the devil!—not I," cried Wood impatiently. "I didn't think you'd been so easily fooled, Joan."

"Fooled or not," returned Mrs. Sheppard mysteriously, "old Van told me *one* thing which has come true already."

"What's that?" asked Wood, with some curiosity.

"He said, by way of comfort, I suppose, after the fright he gave me at first, that the child would find a friend within twenty-four hours, who would stand by him through life."

"A friend is not so soon gained as lost," replied Wood; "but how has the prediction been fulfilled, Joan, eh?"

"I thought you would have guessed, sir," replied the widow, timidly. "I'm sure little Jack has but one friend beside myself in the world, and that's more than I would have ventured to say for him yesterday. However, I've not told you all; for old Van *did* say something about the child saving his new-found friend's life at the time of meeting; but how that's to happen, I'm sure I can't guess."

"Nor any one else in his senses," rejoined Wood, with a laugh. "It's not very likely that a babby of nine months old will save *my* life, if I'm to be his friend, as you seem to say, Mrs. Sheppard. But I've not promised to stand by him yet; nor will I, unless he turns out an honest lad—mind that. Of all crafts—and it was the only craft his poor father, who, to do him justice, was one of the best workmen that ever handled a saw or drove a nail, could never understand—of all crafts, I say, to be an honest man is the master-craft. As long as your son observes that precept I'll befriend him, but no longer."

"I don't desire it, sir," replied Mrs. Sheppard, meekly.

"There's an old proverb," continued Wood, rising and walking towards the fire, "which says,—'Put another man's child in your bosom, and he'll creep out at your elbow.' But I don't value that, because I think it applies

to one who marries a widow with incumbrances; and that's not my case, you know."

"Well, sir," gasped Mrs. Sheppard.

"Well, my dear, I've a proposal to make in regard to this babby of yours, which may, or may not, be agreeable. All I can say is, it's well meant; and I may add, I'd have made it five minutes ago, if you'd given me the opportunity."

"Pray come to the point, sir," said Mrs. Sheppard, somewhat alarmed by this preamble.

"I *am* coming to the point, Joan. The more haste, the worse speed—better the feet slip than the tongue. However, to cut a long matter short, my proposal's this;—I've taken a fancy to your bantling, and, as I've no son of my own, if it meets with your concurrence and that of Mrs. Wood (for I never do anything without consulting my better half), I'll take the boy, educate him, and bring him up to my own business of a carpenter."

The poor widow hung her head, and pressed her child closer to her breast.

"Well, Joan," said the benevolent mechanic, after he had looked at her steadfastly for a few moments, "what say you?—silence gives consent, eh?"

Mrs. Sheppard made an effort to speak, but her voice was choked by emotion.

"Shall I take the babby home with me?" persisted Wood, in a tone between jest and earnest.

"I cannot part with him," replied the widow, bursting into tears; "indeed, indeed, I cannot!"

"So I've found out the way to move her," thought the carpenter; "those tears will do her some good, at all events. Not part with him!" added he, aloud. "Why, you wouldn't stand in the way of his good fortune, surely? I'll be a second father to him, I tell you. Remember what the conjurer said."

"I *do* remember it, sir," replied Mrs. Sheppard, "and am most grateful for your offer. But I dare not accept it."

"Dare not!" echoed the carpenter; "I don't understand you, Joan."

"I mean to say, sir," answered Mrs. Sheppard in a troubled voice, "that if I lost my child, I should lose all I have left in the world. I have neither father, mother, brother, sister, nor husband—I have only *him*."

"If I ask you to part with him, my good woman, it's to better his condition, I suppose, ain't it?" rejoined Wood, angrily; for, though he had no serious intention of carrying his proposal into effect, he was rather offended at having it declined. "It's not an offer," continued he, "that I'm likely to make, or you're likely to receive, every day in the year."

And muttering some remarks, which we do not care to repeat, reflecting upon the consistency of the sex, he was preparing once more to depart, when Mrs. Sheppard stopped him.

"Give me till to-morrow," implored she, "and if I *can* bring myself to part with him, you shall have him without another word."

"Take time to consider of it," replied Wood, sulkily, "there's no hurry."

"Don't be angry with me, sir," cried the widow, sobbing bitterly; "pray, don't. I know I am undeserving of your bounty; but if I were to tell you what hardships I have undergone—to what frightful extremities I have been reduced—and to what infamy I have submitted, to earn a scanty subsistence for this child's sake;—if you could feel what it is to stand alone in the world as I do, bereft of all who have ever loved me, and shunned by all who have ever known me, except the worthless and the wretched;—if you knew (and Heaven grant you may be spared the knowledge!) how much affliction sharpens

love, and how much more dear to me my child has become for every sacrifice I have made for him;—if you were told all this, you would, I am sure, pity rather than reproach me, because I cannot at once consent to a separation, which I feel would break my heart. But give me till to-morrow—only till to-morrow—I may be able to part with him then."

The worthy carpenter was now far more angry with himself than he had previously been with Mrs. Sheppard; and, as soon as he could command his feelings, which were considerably excited by the mention of her distresses, he squeezed her hand warmly, bestowed a hearty execration upon his own inhumanity, and swore he would neither separate her from her child, nor suffer any one else to separate them.

"Plague on't!" added he: "I never meant to take your babby from you. But I'd a mind to try whether you really loved him as much as you pretended. I was to blame to carry the matter so far. However, confession of a fault makes half amends for it. A time *may* come when this little chap will need my aid, and, depend upon it, he shall never want a friend in Owen Wood."

As he said this, the carpenter patted the cheek of the little object of his benevolent professions, and, in so doing, unintentionally aroused him from his slumbers. Opening a pair of large black eyes, the child fixed them for an instant upon Wood, and then, alarmed by the light, uttered a low and melancholy cry, which, however, was speedily stilled by the caresses of his mother, towards whom he extended his tiny arms, as if imploring protection.

"I don't think he would leave me, even if I could part with him," observed Mrs. Sheppard, smiling through her tears.

"I don't think he would," acquiesced the carpenter.

"No friend like the mother, for the babby knows no other."

"And that's true," rejoined Mrs. Sheppard; "for if I had *not* been a mother, I would not have survived the day on which I became a widow."

"You mustn't think of that, Mrs. Sheppard," said Wood, in a soothing tone.

"I can't help thinking of it, sir," answered the widow. "I can never get poor Tom's last look out of my head, as he stood in the Stone-Hall at Newgate, after his irons had been knocked off, unless I manage to stupefy myself somehow. The dismal tolling of St. Sepulchre's bell is forever ringing in my ears—oh!"

"If that's the case," observed Wood, "I'm surprised you should like to have such a frightful picture constantly in view as that over the chimneypiece."

"I'd good reasons for placing it there, sir; but don't question me about them now, or you'll drive me mad," returned Mrs. Sheppard, wildly.

"Well, well, we'll say no more about it," replied Wood; "and, by way of changing the subject, let me advise you on no account to fly to strong waters for consolation, Joan. One nail drives out another, it's true; but the worst nail you can employ is a coffin-nail. Gin Lane's the nearest road to the churchyard."

"It may be; but if it shortens the distance and lightens the journey, I care not," retorted the widow, who seemed by this reproach to be roused into sudden eloquence. "To those who, like me, have never been able to get out of the dark and dreary paths of life, the grave is indeed a refuge, and the sooner they reach it the better. The spirit I drink may be poison—it may kill me—perhaps it is killing me:—but so would hunger, cold, misery—so would my own thoughts. I should have gone mad without it. Gin is the poor man's friend—his sole set-

off against the rich man's luxury. It comforts him when he is most forlorn. It may be treacherous, it may lay up a store of future woe; but it insures present happiness, and that is sufficient. When I have traversed the streets a houseless wanderer, driven with curses from every door where I have solicited alms, and with blows from every gateway where I have sought shelter—when I have crept into some deserted building, and stretched my weary limbs upon a bulk, in the vain hope of repose—or, worse than all, when, frenzied with want, I have yielded to horrible temptation, and earned a meal in the only way I could earn one—when I have felt, at times like these, my heart sink within me, I have drank of this drink, and have at once forgotten my cares, my poverty, my guilt. Old thoughts, old feelings, old faces, and old scenes, have returned to me, and I have fancied myself happy—as happy as I am now." And she burst into a wild hysterical laugh.

"Poor creature!" ejaculated Wood. "Do you call this frantic glee happiness?"

"It's all the happiness I have known for years," returned the widow, becoming suddenly calm, "and it's short-lived enough, as you perceive. I tell you what, Mr. Wood," added she in a hollow voice, and with a ghastly look, "gin may bring ruin; but as long as poverty, vice, and ill-usage exist, it will be drunk."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Wood, fervently; and, as if afraid of prolonging the interview, he added, with some precipitation, "but I must be going: I've stayed here too long already. You shall hear from me to-morrow."

"Stay!" said Mrs. Sheppard, again arresting his departure. "I've just recollected that my husband left a key with me, which he charged me to give you when I could find an opportunity."

"A key!" exclaimed Wood, eagerly. "I lost a very valuable one some time ago. What's it like, Joan?"

"It's a small key, with curiously-fashioned wards."

"It's mine, I'll be sworn!" rejoined Wood. "Well, who'd have thought of finding it in this unexpected way!"

"Don't be too sure till you see it," said the widow. "Shall I fetch it for you, sir?"

"By all means."

"I must trouble you to hold the child, then, for a minute, while I run up to the garret, where I've hidden it for safety," said Mrs. Sheppard. "I think I *may* trust him with you, sir," added she, taking up the candle.

"Don't leave him, if you're at all fearful, my dear," replied Wood, receiving the little burthen with a laugh. "Poor thing!" muttered he, as the widow departed on her errand, "she's seen better days and better circumstances than she'll ever see again, I'm sure. Strange, I could never learn her history. Tom Sheppard was always a close file, and would never tell whom he married. Of this I'm certain, however, she was much too good for him, and was never meant to be a journeyman carpenter's wife, still less what she is now. Her heart's in the right place, at all events; and since that's the case, the rest may perhaps come round—that is, if she gets through her present illness. A dry cough's the trumpeter of death. If that's true, she's not long for this world. As to this little fellow, in spite of the Dutchman, who, in my opinion, is more of a Jacobite than a conjurer, and more of a knave than either, he shall never mount a horse foaled by an acorn, if I can help it."

The course of the carpenter's meditations was here interrupted by a loud note of lamentation from the child, who, disturbed by the transfer, and not receiving the gentle solace to which he was ordinarily accustomed,

raised his voice to the utmost, and exerted his feeble strength to escape. For a few moments Mr. Wood dangled his little charge to and fro, after the most approved nursery fashion, essaying at the same time the soothing influence of an infantine melody proper to the occasion; but, failing in his design, he soon lost all patience, and being, as we have before hinted, rather irritable, though extremely well-meaning, he lifted the unhappy bantling in the air, and shook him with so much good-will, that he had well-nigh silenced him most effectually. A brief calm succeeded. But with returning breath came returning vociferations; and the carpenter, with a faint hope of lessening the clamor by change of scene, took up his lantern, opened the door, and walked out.

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD MINT.

Mrs. Sheppard's habitation terminated a row of old ruinous buildings, called Wheeler's Rents; a dirty thoroughfare, part street and part lane, running from Mint Street, through a variety of turnings, and along the brink of a deep kennel, skirted by a number of pretty and neglected gardens in the direction of Saint George's Fields. The neighboring houses were tenanted by the lowest order of insolvent traders, thieves, mendicants, and other worthless and nefarious characters, who fled thither to escape from their creditors, or to avoid the punishment due to their different offenses; for we may observe that the Old Mint, although it had been divested of some of its privileges as a sanctuary by a recent statute passed in the reign of William the Third, still presented a safe asylum to the debtor, and even continued to do so until the middle of the reign of George the First, when the crying nature of the evil called loudly for a remedy, and another and more sweeping enactment entirely took away its immunities. In consequence of the encouragement thus offered to dishonesty, and the security afforded to crime, this quarter of the Borough of Southwark was accounted (at the period of our narrative) the grand receptacle of the superfluous villainy of the metropolis. Infested by every description of vagabond and miscreant, it was, perhaps, a few degrees worse than the rookery near Saint Giles's and the desperate neighborhood of Saffron Hill in our own time. And yet, on the very site of the sordid tenements and squalid courts we have men-

tioned, where the felon openly made his dwelling, and the fraudulent debtor laughed the object of his knavery to scorn—on this spot, not two centuries ago, stood the princely residence of Charles Brandon, the chivalrous Duke of Suffolk, whose stout heart was a well of honor, and whose memory breathes of loyalty and valor. Suffolk House, as Brandon's palace was denominated, was subsequently converted into a mint by his royal brother-in-law, Henry the Eighth; and, after its demolition, and the removal of the place of coinage to the Tower, the name was still continued to the district in which it had been situated.

Old and dilapidated, the widow's domicile looked the very picture of desolation and misery. Nothing more forlorn could be conceived. The roof was partially untiled; the chimneys were tottering; the side-walls bulged, and were supported by a piece of timber propped against the opposite house; the glass in most of the windows was broken, and its place supplied with paper; while in some cases the very frames of the windows had been destroyed, and the apertures were left free to the airs of heaven. On the ground floor the shutters were closed, or, to speak more correctly, altogether nailed up, and presented a very singular appearance, being patched all over with the soles of old shoes, rusty hobnails, and bits of iron hoops, the ingenious device of the former occupant of the apartment, Paul Groves, the cobbler, to whom we have before alluded.

It was owing to the untimely end of this poor fellow that Mrs. Sheppard was enabled to take possession of the premises. In a fit of despondency, superinduced by drunkenness, he made away with himself; and when the body was discovered, after a lapse of some months, such was the impression produced by the spectacle—such the alarm occasioned by the crazy state of the building, and,

above all, by the terror inspired by strange and unearthly noises heard during the night, which were, of course, attributed to the spirit of the suicide, that the place speedily enjoyed the reputation of being haunted, and was, consequently, entirely abandoned. In this state Mrs. Sheppard found it; and, as no one opposed her, she at once took up her abode there; nor was she long in discovering that the dreaded sounds proceeded from the nocturnal gambols of a legion of rats.

A narrow entry, formed by two low walls, communicated with the main thoroughfare; and in this passage, under the cover of a penthouse, stood Wood with his little burthen, to whom we shall now return.

As Mrs. Sheppard did not make her appearance quite so soon as he expected, the carpenter became a little fidgety, and, having succeeded in tranquilizing the child, he thought proper to walk so far down the entry as would enable him to reconnoiter the upper windows of the house. A light was visible in the garret, feebly struggling through the damp atmosphere, for the night was raw and overcast. This light did not remain stationary, but could be seen at one moment glimmering through the rents in the roof, and at another shining through the cracks in the wall, or the broken panes of the casement. Wood was unable to discover the figure of the widow, but he recognized her dry, hacking cough, and was about to call her down, if she could not find the key, as he imagined must be the case, when a loud noise was heard, as though a chest, or some weighty substance, had fallen upon the floor.

Before Wood had time to inquire into the cause of this sound, his attention was diverted by a man, who rushed past the entry with the swiftness of desperation. This individual apparently met with some impediment to his further progress; for he had not proceeded many steps

when he turned suddenly about, and darted up the passage in which Wood stood.

Uttering a few inarticulate ejaculations—for he was completely out of breath—the fugitive placed a bundle in the arms of the carpenter, and, regardless of the consternation he excited in the breast of that personage, who was almost stupefied with astonishment, he began to divest himself of a heavy horseman's cloak, which he threw over Wood's shoulder, and, drawing his sword, seemed to listen intently for the approach of his pursuers.

The appearance of the newcomer was extremely prepossessing ; and, after his trepidation had a little subsided, Wood began to regard him with some degree of interest. Evidently in the flower of his age, he was scarcely less remarkable for symmetry of person than for comeliness of feature ; and, though his attire was plain and unpretending, it was such as could be worn only by one belonging to the higher ranks of society. His figure was tall and commanding, and the expression of his countenance (though somewhat disturbed by his recent exertion), was resolute and stern.

At this juncture, a cry burst from the child, who, nearly smothered by the weight imposed upon him, only recovered the use of his lungs as Wood altered the position of the bundle. The stranger turned his head at the sound.

"By Heaven!" cried he in a tone of surprise, "you have an infant there!"

"To be sure I have," replied Wood, angrily ; for, finding that the intentions of the stranger were pacific, so far as he was concerned, he thought he might safely venture on a slight display of spirit. "It's very well you haven't crushed the poor little thing to death with this confounded clothes-bag. But some people have no consideration."

"That child may be the means of saving me," muttered the stranger, as if struck by a new idea: "I shall gain time by the expedient. Do you live here?"

"Not exactly," answered the carpenter.

"No matter. The door is open, so it is needless to ask leave to enter. Ha!" exclaimed the stranger, as shouts and other vociferations resounded at no great distance along the thoroughfare, "not a moment is to be lost. Give me that precious charge," he added, snatching the bundle from Wood. "If I escape, I will reward you. Your name?"

"Owen Wood," replied the carpenter; "I've no reason to be ashamed of it. And now, a fair exchange, sir. Yours?"

The stranger hesitated. The shouts drew nearer, and lights were seen flashing ruddily against the sides and gables of the neighboring houses.

"My name is Darrell," said the fugitive hastily. "But, if you are discovered, answer no questions, as you value your life. Wrap yourself in my cloak, and keep it. Remember! not a word!"

So saying, he huddled the mantle over Wood's shoulders, dashed the lantern to the ground, and extinguished the light. A moment afterwards, the door was closed and bolted, and the carpenter found himself alone.

"Mercy on us!" cried he, as a thrill of apprehension ran through his frame. "The Dutchman was right, after all."

This exclamation had scarcely escaped him, when the discharge of a pistol was heard and a bullet whizzed past his ears.

"I have him!" cried a voice in triumph.

A man then rushed up the entry, and, seizing the unlucky carpenter by the collar, presented a drawn sword to his throat. This person was speedily fol-

lowed by half a dozen others, some of whom carried flambeaux.

"Mur—der!" roared Wood, struggling to free himself from his assailant, by whom he was half strangled.

"Damnation!" exclaimed one of the leaders of the party in a furious tone, snatching a torch from an attendant, and throwing its light full upon the face of the carpenter; "this is not the villain, Sir Cecil."

"So I find, Rowland," replied the other, in accents of deep disappointment, and at the same time relinquishing his grasp. "I could have sworn I saw him enter this passage. And how comes his cloak on this knave's shoulders?"

"It *is* his cloak, of a surety," returned Rowland. "Harkye, sirrah," continued he, haughtily interrogating Wood; "where is the person from whom you received this mantle?"

"Throttling a man isn't the way to make him answer questions," replied the carpenter, doggedly. "You'll get nothing out of me, I can promise you, unless you show a little more civility."

"We waste time with this fellow," interposed Sir Cecil, "and may lose the object of our quest, who, beyond doubt, has taken refuge in this building. Let us search it."

Just then the infant began to sob piteously.

"Hist!" cried Rowland, arresting his comrade. "Do you hear that? We are not wholly at fault. The dog-fox cannot be far off since the cub is found."

With these words, he tore the mantle from Wood's back, and, perceiving the child, endeavored to seize it. In this attempt he was, however, foiled by the agility of the carpenter, who managed to retreat to the door, against which he placed his back, kicking the boards vigorously with his heel.

"Joan! Joan!" vociferated he, "open the door, for God's sake, or I shall be murdered, and so will your babby! Open the door quickly, I say!"

"Knock him on the head," thundered Sir Cecil, "or we shall have the watch upon us."

"No fear of that," rejoined Rowland; "such vermin never dare to show themselves in this privileged district. All we have to apprehend is a rescue."

The hint was not lost upon Wood. He tried to raise an outcry, but his throat was again forcibly griped by Rowland.

"Another such attempt," said the latter, "and you are a dead man. Yield up the babe, and I pledge my word you shall remain unmolested."

"I will yield it to no one but its mother," answered Wood.

"'Sdeath! do you trifle with me, sirrah?" cried Rowland fiercely. "Give me the child, or——"

As he spoke the door was thrown open, and Mrs. Sheppard staggered forward. She looked paler than ever; but her countenance, though bewildered, did not exhibit the alarm which might naturally have been anticipated from the strange and perplexing scene presented to her view.

"Take it," cried Wood, holding the infant towards her; "take it and fly."

Mrs. Sheppard put out her arms mechanically. But before the child could be committed to her care, it was wrested from the carpenter by Rowland.

"These people are all in league with him," cried the latter. "But don't wait for me, Sir Cecil. Enter the house with your men. I'll dispose of the brat."

This injunction was instantly obeyed. The knight and his followers crossed the threshold, leaving one of the torch-bearers behind them.

"Davies," said Rowland, delivering the babe with a meaning look, to his attendant.

"I understand, sir," replied Davies, drawing a little aside. And, setting down the link, he proceeded deliberately to untie his cravat.

"My God, will you see your child strangled before your eyes, and not so much as scream for help?" said Wood, staring at the widow with a look of surprise and horror. "Woman, your wits are fled!"

And so it seemed; for all the answer she could make was to murmur distractedly, "I can't find the key."

"Devil take the key!" ejaculated Wood. "They're about to murder your child—*your* child, I tell you! Do you comprehend what I say, Joan?"

"I've hurt my head," replied Mrs. Sheppard, pressing her hand to her temples.

And then, for the first time, Wood noticed a small stream of blood coursing slowly down her cheek.

At this moment, Davies, who had completed his preparations, extinguished the torch.

"It's all over," groaned Wood, "and perhaps it's as well her senses are gone. However, I'll make a last effort (to save the poor little creature) if it costs me my life."

And, with this generous resolve, he shouted at the top of his voice, "Arrest! arrest! help! help!" seconding the words with a shrill and peculiar cry, well known at the time to the inhabitants of the quarter in which it was uttered.

In reply to this summons a horn was instantly blown at the corner of the street.

"Arrest!" vociferated Wood. "Mint! Mint!"

"Death and hell!" cried Rowland, making a furious pass at the carpenter, who fortunately avoided the thrust in the darkness; "will nothing silence you?"

"Help!" ejaculated Wood, renewing his cries. "Arrest!"

"Jigger closed!" shouted a hoarse voice in reply. "All's bowman, my covey. Fear nothing. We'll be upon the bandogs before they can shake their trotters!"

And the alarm was sounded more loudly than ever.

Another horn now resounded from the further extremity of the thoroughfare; this was answered by a third; and presently a fourth and more remote blast took up the note of alarm. The whole neighborhood was disturbed. A garrison called to arms at dead of night on the sudden approach of the enemy, could not have been more expeditiously or effectually aroused. Rattles were sprung; lanterns lighted, and hoisted at the end of poles; windows thrown open; doors unbarred; and, as if by magic, the street was instantaneously filled with a crowd of persons of both sexes, armed with such weapons as came most readily to hand, and dressed in such garments as could be most easily slipped on. Hurrying in the direction of the supposed arrest, they encouraged each other with shouts, and threatened the offending parties with their vengeance.

Regardless, as the gentry of the Mint usually were (for, indeed, they had become habituated from their frequent occurrence to such scenes), of any outrages committed in their streets; deaf, as they had been, to the recent scuffle before Mrs. Sheppard's door, they were always sufficiently on the alert to maintain their privileges, and to assist each other against the attacks of their common enemy—the sheriff's officer. It was only by the adoption of such a course (especially since the late act of suppression, to which we have alluded) that the inviolability of the asylum could be preserved. Incursions were often made upon its territories by the functionaries of the law—sometimes attended with success, but more frequently with

discomfiture; and it rarely happened, unless by stratagem or bribery, that (in the language of the gentlemen of the short staff) an important caption could be effected. In order to guard against accidents or surprises, watchmen, or scouts (as they were styled), were stationed at the three main outlets of the sanctuary, ready to give the signal in the manner just described: bars were erected, which in case of emergency could be immediately stretched across the streets; doors were attached to the alleys, and were never opened without due precautions; gates were affixed to the courts, wickets to the gates, and bolts to the wickets. The back windows of the houses (where any such existed) were strongly barricaded, and kept constantly shut; and the fortress was, furthermore, defended by high walls and deep ditches in those quarters where it appeared most exposed. There was also a Maze (the name is still retained in the district) into which the debtor could run, and through the intricacies of which it was impossible for an officer to follow him, without a clue. Whoever chose to incur the risk of so doing might enter the Mint at any hour; but no one was suffered to depart without giving a satisfactory account of himself, or producing a pass from the Master. In short, every contrivance that ingenuity could devise was resorted to by this horde of reprobates to secure themselves from danger or molestation. Whitefriars had lost its privileges; Salisbury Court and the Savoy no longer offered places of refuge to the debtor; and it was, therefore, doubly requisite that the Island of Bermuda (as the Mint was termed by its occupants) should uphold its rights, as long as it was able to do so.

Mr. Wood, meantime, had not remained idle. Aware that not a moment was to be lost, if he meant to render any effectual assistance to the child, he ceased shouting, and defending himself in the best way he could from the

attacks of Rowland, by whom he was closely pressed, forced his way, in spite of all opposition, to Davies, and dealt him a blow on the head with such good-will, that, had it not been for the intervention of the wall, the ruffian must have been prostrated. Before he could recover from the stunning effects of the blow, Wood possessed himself of the child; and, untying the noose which had been slipped round its throat, had the satisfaction of hearing it cry lustily.

At this juncture, Sir Cecil and his followers appeared at the threshold.

"He has escaped!" exclaimed the knight; "we have searched every corner of the house without finding a trace of him."

"Back!" cried Rowland. "Don't you hear those shouts? Yon fellow's clamor has brought the whole horde of jail-birds and cut-throats that infest this place about our ears. We shall be torn in pieces if we are discovered. Davies!" he added, calling to the attendant, who was menacing Wood with a severe retaliation, "don't heed him; but, if you value a whole skin, come into the house, and bring that woman with you. She may afford us some necessary information."

Davis reluctantly complied. And dragging Mrs. Sheppard, who made no resistance, along with him, entered the house, the door of which was instantly shut and barricaded.

A moment afterwards, the street was illumined by a blaze of torchlight, and a tumultuous uproar, mixed with the clashing of weapons, and the braying of horns, announced the arrival of the first detachment of Minters.

Mr. Wood rushed instantly to meet them.

"Hurrah!" shouted he, waving his hat triumphantly over his head. "Saved!"

"Ay, ay, it's all bob, my covey! You're safe enough,

that's certain!" responded the Minters, baying, yelping, leaping, and howling around him like a pack of hounds when the huntsman is beating cover; "but, where are the lurchers?"

"Who?" asked Wood.

"The traps!" responded a bystander.

"The shoulder-clappers!" added a lady, who, in her anxiety to join the party, had unintentionally substituted her husband's nether habiliments for her own petticoats.

"The bandogs!" thundered a tall man, whose stature and former avocations had procured him the nickname of "The long drover of the Borough market." "Where are they?"

"Ay, where are they?" chorused the mob, flourishing their various weapons, and flashing their torches in the air; "we'll serve 'em out."

Mr. Wood trembled. He felt he had raised a storm which it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to allay. He knew not what to say, or what to do; and his confusion was increased by the threatening gestures and furious looks of the ruffians in his immediate vicinity.

"I don't understand you, gentlemen," stammered he, at length.

"What does he say?" roared the long drover.

"He says he don't understand flash," replied the lady in gentleman's attire.

"Cease your confounded clutter!" said a young man, whose swarthy visage, seen in the torchlight, struck Wood, as being that of a Mulatto. "You frighten the cull out of his senses. It's plain he don't understand our lingo; as, how should he? Take pattern by me;" and as he said this he strode up to the carpenter, and, slapping him on the shoulder, propounded the following questions, accompanying each interrogation with a formidable con-

tortion of countenance. "Curse you! where are the bailiffs? Rot you! have you lost your tongue? Devil seize you! you could bawl loud enough a moment ago!"

"Silence, Blueskin!" interposed an authoritative voice, immediately behind the ruffian. "Let me have a word with the cull!"

"Ay! ay!" cried several of the bystanders, "let Jonathan kimbaw the cove. He's got the gift of the gab."

The crowd accordingly drew aside, and the individual, in whose behalf the movement had been made, immediately stepped forward. He was a young man of about two-and-twenty, who, without having anything remarkable either in dress or appearance, was yet a noticeable person, if only for the indescribable expression of cunning pervading his countenance. His eyes were small and gray; as far apart and as sly-looking as those of a fox. A physiognomist, indeed, would have likened him to that crafty animal, and it must be owned the general formation of his features favored such a comparison. The nose was long and sharp, the chin pointed, the forehead broad and flat, and connected, without any intervening hollow, with the eyelid; the teeth, when displayed, seemed to reach from ear to ear. Then his beard was of a reddish hue, and his complexion warm and sanguine. Those who had seen him slumbering, averred that he slept with his eyes open. But this might be merely a figurative mode of describing his customary vigilance. Certain it was, that the slightest sound aroused him. This astute personage was somewhat under the middle size, but fairly proportioned, inclining rather to strength than symmetry, and abounding more in muscle than in flesh.

It would seem, from the attention which he evidently bestowed upon the hidden and complex machinery of the grand system of villainy at work around him, that his

chief object, in taking up his quarters in the Mint, must have been to obtain some private information respecting the habits and practises of its inhabitants, to be turned to account hereafter.

Advancing towards Wood, Jonathan fixed his keen gray eyes upon him, and demanded, in a stern tone, whether the persons who had taken refuge in the adjoining house were bailiffs.

"Not that I know of," replied the carpenter, who had in some degree recovered his confidence.

"Then I presume you've not been arrested?"

"I have not," answered Wood, firmly.

"I guessed as much. Perhaps you'll next inform us why you have occasioned this disturbance?"

"Because this child's life was threatened by the persons you have mentioned," rejoined Wood.

"An excellent reason, i' faith!" exclaimed Blueskin, with a roar of surprise and indignation, which was echoed by the whole assemblage. "And so we're to be summonded from our beds and snug firesides, because a kid happens to squall, eh? By the soul of my grandmother, but this is too good!"

"Do you intend to claim the privileges of the Mint?" said Jonathan, calmly pursuing his interrogations amid the uproar. "Is your person in danger?"

"Not from my creditors," replied Wood, significantly.

"Will he post the cole? Will he come down with the dues? Ask him that?" cried Blueskin.

"You hear," pursued Jonathan; "my friend desires to know if you are willing to pay your footing as a member of the ancient and respectable fraternity of debtors?"

"I owe no man a farthing, and my name shall never appear in any such rascally list," replied Wood, angrily. "I don't see why I should be obliged to pay for doing my duty. I tell you this child would have been strangled.

The noose was at its throat when I called for help. I knew it was in vain to cry 'murder' in the Mint, so I had recourse to stratagem."

"Well, sir, I must say you deserve some credit for your ingenuity, at all events," replied Jonathan, repressing a smile; "but, before you put out your foot so far, it would have been quite as prudent to consider how you were to draw it back again. For my own part I don't see in what way it is to be accomplished, except by the payment of our customary fees. Do not imagine you can at one moment avail yourself of our excellent regulations (with which you seem sufficiently well acquainted), and the next break them with impunity. If you assume the character of a debtor for your own convenience, you must be content to maintain it for ours. If you have not been arrested, we have been disturbed; and it is but just and reasonable you should pay for occasioning such disturbance. By your own showing you are in easy circumstances—for it is only natural to presume that a man who owes nothing must be in a condition to pay liberally—and you cannot therefore feel the loss of such a trifle as ten guineas."

However illogical and inconclusive these arguments might appear to Mr. Wood, and however he might dissent from the latter proposition, he did not deem it expedient to make any reply: and the orator proceeded with his harangue amid the general applause of the assemblage.

"I am perhaps exceeding my authority in demanding so slight a sum," continued Jonathan, modestly, "and the Master of the Mint may not be disposed to let you off so lightly. He will be here in a moment or so, and you will then learn his determination. In the meantime, let me advise you as a friend not to irritate him by a refusal, which would be as useless as vexatious. He has a very summary mode of dealing with refractory persons, I

assure you. My best endeavors shall be used to bring you off, on the easy terms I have mentioned."

"Do you call ten guineas easy terms?" cried Wood, with a look of dismay. "Why, I should expect to purchase the entire freehold of the Mint for less money."

"Many a man has been glad to pay double the amount to get his head from under the Mint pump," observed Blueskin, gruffly.

"Let the gentleman take his own course," said Jonathan, mildly. "I should be sorry to persuade him to do any thing his calmer judgment might disapprove."

"Exactly my sentiments," rejoined Blueskin. "I wouldn't force him for the world; but if he don't tip the stivers, may I be cursed if he don't get a taste of the *aqua pompaginis*. Let's have a look at the kinchen that *ought* to have been throttled," added he, snatching the child from Wood. "My stars!" here's a pretty lullaby-cheat to make a fuss about—ho! ho!"

"Deal with me as you think proper, gentlemen," exclaimed Wood; "but for mercy's sake don't harm the child! Let it be taken to its mother."

"And who is its mother?" asked Jonathan, in an eager whisper. "Tell me frankly, and speak under your breath. Your own safety—the child's safety—depends upon your candor."

While Mr. Wood underwent this examination, Blueskin felt a small, trembling hand placed upon his own, and, turning at the summons, beheld a young female, whose features were partially concealed by a loo, or half mask, standing beside him. Coarse as were the ruffian's notions of feminine beauty, he could not be insensible to the surpassing loveliness of the fair creature who had thus solicited his attention. Her figure was in some measure hidden by a large scarf, and a deep hood drawn over the head contributed to her disguise; still it was

evident, from her lofty bearing, that she had nothing in common, except an interest in their proceedings, with the crew by whom she was surrounded.

Whence she came—who she was—and what she wanted—were questions which naturally suggested themselves to Blueskin, and he was about to seek for some explanation, when his curiosity was checked by a gesture of silence from the lady.

"Hush!" said she, in a low but agitated voice; "would you earn this purse?"

"I've no objection," replied Blueskin, in a tone intended to be gentle, but which sounded like the murmuring whine of a playful bear. "How much is there in it?"

"It contains gold," replied the lady; "but I will add this ring."

"What am I to do to earn it?" asked Blueskin, with a disgusting leer,—"cut a throat—or throw myself at your feet—eh, my dear?"

"Give me that child," returned the lady, with difficulty overcoming the loathing inspired by the ruffian's familiarity.

"Oh! I see!" replied Blueskin, winking significantly. "Come nearer, or they'll observe us. Don't be afraid—I won't hurt you. I'm always agreeable to the women, bless their kind hearts! Now! slip the purse into my hand. Bravo!—the best cly-faker of 'em all couldn't have done it better. And now for the fawney—the ring I mean. I'm no great judge of these articles, ma'am; but I trust to your honor not to palm off paste upon me."

"It is a diamond," said the lady, in an agony of distress—"the child!"

"A diamond! Here, take the kid," cried Blueskin, slipping the infant adroitly under her scarf. "And so this is a diamond," added he, contemplating the brilliant

from the hollow of his hand: "it does sparkle almost as brightly as your ogles. By the by, my dear, I forgot to ask your name—perhaps you'll oblige me with it now? Hell and the devil!—gone!"

He looked around in vain. The lady had disappeared.

CHAPTER III.

THE MASTER OF THE MINT.

Jonathan, meanwhile, having ascertained the parentage of the child from Wood, proceeded to question him, in an undertone, as to the probable motives of the attempt upon its life; and, though he failed in obtaining any information on this point, he had little difficulty in eliciting such particulars of the mysterious transaction as have already been recounted. When the carpenter concluded his recital, Jonathan was for a moment lost in reflection.

"Devilish strange!" thought he, chuckling to himself; "queer business! Capital trick of the cull in the cloak to make another person's brat stand the brunt for his own—capital! ha! ha! Won't do, though. He must be a sly fox to get out of the Mint without my knowledge. I've a shrewd guess where he's taken refuge; but I'll ferret him out. These bloods will pay well for his capture; if not, *he'll* pay well to get out of their hands; so I'm safe either way—ha! ha! Blueskin," he added aloud, and motioning that worthy, "follow me."

Upon which, he set off in the direction of the entry. His progress, however, was checked by loud acclamations, announcing the arrival of the Master of the Mint and his train.

Baptist Kettleby (for so was the Master named) was a "goodly portly man, and a corpulent," whose fair round paunch bespoke the affection he entertained for good liquor and good living. He had a quick, shrewd, merry eye, and a look in which duplicity was agreeably veiled by

good humor. It was easy to discover that he was a knave, but equally easy to perceive that he was a pleasant fellow; a combination of qualities by no means of rare occurrence. So far as regards his attire, Baptist was not seen to advantage. No great lover of state or state costume at any time, he was generally, towards the close of an evening, completely in dishabille, and in this condition he now presented himself to his subjects. His shirt was unfastened, his vest unbuttoned, his hose ungartered; his feet were stuck into a pair of pantoufles, his arms into a greasy flannel dressing-gown, his head into a thrum-cap, the cap into a tie-periwig, and the wig into a gold-edged hat. A white apron was tied round his waist, and into the apron was thrust a short thick truncheon, which looked very much like a rolling-pin.

The Master of the Mint was accompanied by another gentleman almost as portly as himself, and quite as deliberate in his movements. The costume of this personage was somewhat singular, and might have passed for a masquerading habit, had not the imperturbable gravity of his demeanor forbidden any such supposition. It consisted of a close jerkin of brown frieze, ornamented with a triple row of brass buttons ; loose Dutch slops, made very wide in the seat and very tight at the knees ; red stockings with black clocks, and a fur cap. The owner of this dress had a broad weatherbeaten face, small twinkling eyes, and a bushy, grizzled beard. Though he walked by the side of the governor, he seldom exchanged a word with him, but appeared wholly absorbed in the contemplations inspired by a broad-bowled Dutch pipe.

Behind the illustrious personages just described marched a troop of stalwart fellows, with white badges in their hats, quarter-staves, oaken cudgels, and links in their hands. These were the Master's body-guard.

Advancing towards the Master and claiming an audience, which was instantly granted, Jonathan, without much circumlocution, related the sum of the strange story he had just learnt from Wood, omitting nothing except a few trifling particulars, which he thought it politic to keep back; and with this view, he said not a word of there being any probability of capturing the fugitive, but, on the contrary, roundly asserted that his informant had witnessed that person's escape.

The Master listened, with becoming attention, to the narrative, and, at its conclusion, shook his head gravely, applied his thumb to the side of his nose, and, twirling his fingers significantly, winked at his phlegmatic companion. The gentleman appealed to shook his head in reply, coughed as only a Dutchman *can* cough, and raising his hand from the bowl of his pipe, went through precisely the same mysterious ceremonial as the Master.

Putting his own construction upon this mute interchange of opinions, Jonathan ventured to observe, that it certainly was a very perplexing case, but that he thought something *might* be made of it, and, if left to him, he would undertake to manage the matter to the Master's entire satisfaction.

"Ja, ja, Muntmeester," said the Dutchman, removing the pipe from his mouth, and speaking in a deep and guttural voice, "leave the affair to Johannes. He'll settle it brafely. And let ush go back to our brandewyn, and hollandsche genever. Dese ere not schouts, as you faind, but jonkers on a vrolyk; and if dey'd chanshed to keel de vrow Sheppard's pet lamb, dey'd have done her a servish, by shaving it from dat unpleasant complaint, de hempen fever, with which its laatter days are threatened, and of which its poor vader died. Myn Got! haanging runs in some families, Muntmeester. It's hereditary, like de jigt; vat you call it—gout?—haw! haw!"

"If the child *is* destined to the gibbet, Van Galgebrok," replied the Master, joining in the laugh, "it'll never be choked by a footman's cravat, that's certain; but, in regard to going back empty-handed," continued he, altering his tone, and assuming a dignified air, "it's quite out of the question. With Baptist Kettleby, to engage in a matter is to go through with it. Besides, this is an affair which no one but myself can settle. Common offenses may be decided upon by deputy; but outrages perpetrated by men of rank, as these appear to be, must be judged by the Master of the Mint in person. These are the decrees of the Island of Bermuda, and I will never suffer its excellent laws to be violated. Gentlemen of the Mint," added he, pointing with his truncheon towards Mrs. Sheppard's house, "forward!"

"Hurrah!" shouted the mob, and the whole phalanx was put in motion in that direction. At the same moment a martial flourish, proceeding from cows' horns, tin canisters filled with stones, bladders and catgut, with other sprightly instruments, was struck up, and, enlivened by this harmonious accompaniment, the troop reached its destination in the best possible spirits for an encounter.

"Let us in," said the Master, rapping his truncheon authoritatively against the boards, or we'll force an entrance."

But as no answer was returned to the summons, though it was again, and more peremptorily, repeated, Baptist seized a mallet from a bystander and burst open the door. Followed by Van Galgebrok and others of his retinue, he then rushed into the room, where Rowland, Sir Cecil, and their attendants, stood with drawn swords prepared to receive them.

"Beat down their blades," cried the Master; "no bloodshed."

"Beat out their brains, you mean," rejoined Blueskin

with a tremendous imprecation ; "no half measures now, Master."

"Hadn't you better hold a moment's parley with the gentlemen before proceeding to extremities?" suggested Jonathan.

"Agreed," responded the Master. "Surely," he added, staring at Rowland, "either I'm greatly mistaken, or it is——"

"You are not mistaken, Baptist," returned Rowland with a gesture of silence; "it is your old friend. I'm glad to recognize you."

"And I'm glad your worship's recognition doesn't come too late," observed the Master. "But why didn't you make yourself known at once?"

"I'd forgotten the office you hold in the Mint, Baptist," replied Rowland. "But clear the room of this rabble, if you have sufficient authority over them. I would speak with you."

"There's but one way of clearing it, your worship," said the Master, archly.

"I understand," replied Rowland. "Give them what you please. I'll repay you."

"It's all right, pals," cried Baptist, in a loud tone; "the gentlemen and I have settled matters. No more scuffling."

"What's the meaning of all this?" demanded Sir Cecil. "How have you contrived to still these troubled waters?"

"I've chanced upon an old ally in the Master of the Mint," answered Rowland. "We may trust him," he added in a whisper; "he is a stanch friend of the good cause."

"Blueskin, clear the room," cried the Master; "these gentlemen would be private. They've *paid* for their lodging. Where's Jonathan?"

Inquiries were instantly made after that individual, but he was nowhere to be found.

"Strange!" observed the Master; "I thought he'd been at my elbow all this time. But it don't much matter—though he's a devilish shrewd fellow, and might have helped me out of a difficulty, had any occurred. Hark ye, Blueskin," continued he, addressing that personage, who, in obedience to his commands, had, with great promptitude, driven out the rabble, and again secured the door, "a word in your ear. What female entered the house with us?"

"Blood and thunder!" exclaimed Blueskin, afraid, if he admitted having seen the lady, of being compelled to divide the plunder he had obtained from her among his companions, "how should I know? D'ye suppose I'm always thinking of the petticoats? I observed no female; but if any one *did* join the assault, it must have been either Amazonian Kate, or Fighting Moll."

"The woman I mean did not join the assault," rejoined the Master, "but rather seemed to shun observation; and, from the hasty glimpse I caught of her, she appeared to have a child in her arms."

"Then, most probably, it was the widow Sheppard," answered Blueskin, sulkily.

"Right," said the Master, "I didn't think of her. And now I've another job for you."

"Propose it," returned Blueskin, inclining his head.

"Square accounts with the rascal who got up the sham arrest; and, if he don't tip the cole without more ado, give him a taste of the pump, that's all."

"He shall go through the whole course," replied Blueskin, with a ferocious grin, "unless he comes down to the last grig. We'll lather him with mud, shave him with a rusty razor, and drench him with *aqua pompaginis.*

Master, your humble servant.—Gentlemen, your most obsequious trout."

Having effected his object, which was to get rid of Blueskin, Baptist turned to Rowland and Sir Cecil, who had watched his proceedings with much impatience, and remarked, "Now, gentlemen, the coast's clear; we've nothing to interrupt us. I'm entirely at your service."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROOF AND THE WINDOW.

Leaving them to pursue their conference, we shall follow the footsteps of Jonathan, who, as the Master surmised, and, as we have intimated, had unquestionably entered the house. But at the beginning of the affray, when he thought every one was too much occupied with his own concerns to remark his absence, he slipped out of the room, not for the purpose of avoiding the engagement (for cowardice was not one of his failings), but because he had another object in view. Creeping stealthily up-stairs, unmasking a dark lantern, and glancing into each room as he passed, he was startled in one of them by the appearance of Mrs. Sheppard, who seemed to be crouching upon the floor. Satisfied, however, that she did not notice him, Jonathan glided away as noiselessly as he came, and ascended another short flight of stairs leading to the garret. As he crossed this chamber, his foot struck against something on the floor, which nearly threw him down, and, stooping to examine the object, he found it was a key. "Never throw away a chance," thought Jonathan. "Who knows but this key may open a golden lock one of these days?" And, picking it up, he thrust it into his pocket.

Arrived beneath an aperture in the broken roof, he was preparing to pass through it, when he observed a little heap of tiles upon the floor, which appeared to have been recently dislodged. "He *has* passed this way," cried Jonathan, exultingly; "I have him safe enough." He then closed the lantern, mounted without much diffi-

culty upon the roof, and proceeded cautiously along the tiles.

The night was now profoundly dark. Jonathan had to feel his way. A single false step might have precipitated him into the street; or, if he had trodden upon an unsound part of the roof, he must have fallen through it. He had nothing to guide him, for though the torches were blazing ruddily below, their gleam fell only on the side of the building. The venturous climber gazed for a moment at the assemblage beneath, to ascertain that he was not discovered; and, having satisfied himself in this particular, he stepped out more boldly. On gaining a stack of chimneys at the back of the house, he came to a pause, and again unmasked his lantern. Nothing, however, could be discerned except the crumbling brickwork. "Confusion!" ejaculated Jonathan; "can he have escaped? No. The walls are too high, and the windows too stoutly barricaded in this quarter, to admit such a supposition. He can't be far off. I shall find him yet. Ah! I have it," he added, after a moment's deliberation; "he's there, I'll be sworn." And, once more enveloping himself in darkness, he pursued his course.

He had now reached the adjoining house, and, scaling the roof, approached another building, which seemed to be, at least, one story loftier than its neighbors. Apparently, Jonathan was well acquainted with the premises; for, feeling about in the dark, he speedily discovered a ladder, up the steps of which he hurried. Drawing a pistol, and unclosing his lantern with the quickness of thought, he then burst through an open trap-door into a small loft.

The light fell upon the fugitive, who stood before him in an attitude of defense, with the child in his arms.

"Aha!" exclaimed Jonathan, acting upon the informa-

tion he had obtained from Wood, "I have found you at last. Your servant, Mr. Darrell."

"Who are you?" demanded the fugitive sternly.

"A friend," replied Jonathan, uncocking the pistol, and placing it in his pocket.

"How do I know you are a friend?" asked Darrell.

"What should I do here alone if I were an enemy? But, come, don't let us waste time in bandying words, when we might employ it so much more profitably. Your life, and that of your child, are in my power. What will you give me to save you from your pursuers?"

"*Can* you do so?" asked the other, doubtfully.

"I can, and will. Now, the reward?"

"I have but an ill-furnished purse. But, if I escape, my gratitude——"

"Pshaw!" interrupted Jonathan, scornfully. "Your gratitude will vanish with your danger. Pay fools with promises. I must have something in hand."

"You shall have all I have about me," replied Darrell.

"Well—well," grumbled Jonathan, "I suppose I must be content. An ill-lined purse is a poor recompense for the risk I have run. However, come along. I needn't tell you to tread carefully. You know the danger of this breakneck road as well as I do. The light would betray us." So saying, he closed the lantern.

"Harkye, sir," rejoined Darrell; "one word before I move. I know not who you are; and, as I cannot discern your face, I may be doing you an injustice. But there is something in your voice that makes me distrust you. If you attempt to play the traitor, you will do so at the hazard of your life."

"I have already hazarded my life in this attempt to save you," returned Jonathan boldly, and with apparent frankness; "this ought to be sufficient answer to your doubts. Your pursuers are below. What was to hinder

me, if I had been so inclined, from directing them to your retreat?"

"Enough," replied Darrell. "Lead on!"

Followed by Darrell, Jonathan retraced his dangerous path. As he approached the gable of Mrs. Sheppard's house, loud yells and vociferations reached his ears; and, looking downwards, he perceived a great stir amid the mob. The cause of this uproar was soon manifest. Blueskin and the Minters were dragging Wood to the pump. The unfortunate carpenter struggled violently, but ineffectually. His hat was placed upon one pole, his wig on another. His shouts for help were answered by roars of mockery and laughter. He continued alternately to be tossed in the air, or rolled in the kennel, until he was borne out of sight. The spectacle seemed to afford as much amusement to Jonathan as to the actors engaged in it. He could not contain his satisfaction, but chuckled, and rubbed his hands with delight.

"By Heaven!" cried Darrell, "it is the poor fellow whom I placed in such jeopardy a short time ago. I am the cause of his ill-usage."

"To be sure you are," replied Jonathan, laughing. "But, what of that? It'll be a lesson to him in future, and will show him the folly of doing a good-natured action!"

But perceiving that his companion did not relish his pleasantry, and fearing that his sympathy for the carpenter's situation might betray him into some act of imprudence, Jonathan, without further remark, and by way of putting an end to the discussion, let himself drop through the roof. His example was followed by Darrell. But, though the latter was somewhat embarrassed by his burthen, he peremptorily declined Jonathan's offer of assistance. Both, however, having safely landed, they cautiously crossed the room, and passed down the first

flight of steps in silence. At this moment, a door was opened below; lights gleamed on the walls; and the figures of Rowland and Sir Cecil were distinguished at the foot of the stairs.

Darrell stopped, and drew his sword.

"You have betrayed me," said he, in a deep whisper, to his companion; "but you shall reap the reward of your treachery."

"Be still!" returned Jonathan, in the same undertone, and with great self-possession; "I can yet save you. And see!" he added, as the figures drew back, and the lights disappeared; "it's a false alarm. They have retired. However, not a moment is to be lost. Give me your hand."

He then hurried Darrell down another short flight of steps, and entered a small chamber at the back of the house. Closing the door, Jonathan next produced his lantern, and, hastening towards the window, undrew a bolt by which it was fastened. A stout wooden shutter, opening inwardly, being removed, disclosed a grating of iron bars. This obstacle, which appeared to preclude the possibility of egress in that quarter, was speedily got rid of. Withdrawing another bolt, and unhooking a chain suspended from the top of the casement, Jonathan pushed the iron framework outwards. The bars dropped noiselessly and slowly down, till the chain tightened at the staple.

"You are free," said he, "that grating forms a ladder, by which you may descend in safety. I learnt the trick of the place from one Paul Groves, who used to live here, and who contrived the machine. He used to call it his fire escape—ha! ha! I've often used the ladder for my own convenience, but I never expected to turn it to such good account. And now, sir, have I kept faith with you?"

"You have," replied Darrell. "Here is my purse; and I trust you will let me know to whom I am indebted for this important service."

"It matters not who I am," replied Jonathan, taking the money. "As I said before, I have little reliance upon *professions* of gratitude."

"I know not how it is," sighed Darrell, "but I feel an unaccountable misgiving at quitting this place. Something tells me I am rushing on greater danger."

"You know best," replied Jonathan, sneeringly; "but if I were in your place, I would take the chance of a future and uncertain risk to avoid a present and certain peril."

"You are right," replied Darrell; "the weakness is past. Which is the nearest way to the river?"

"Why, it is an awkward road to direct you," returned Jonathan. "But if you turn to the right when you reach the ground, and keep close to the Mint wall, you'll speedily arrive at White Cross Street; White Cross Street, if you turn again to the right, will bring you into Queen Street; Queen Street, bearing to the left, will conduct you to Deadman's Place; and Deadman's Place to the water-side, not fifty yards from Saint Saviour's stairs, where you're sure to get a boat."

"The very point I aim at," said Darrell, as he passed through the outlet.

"Stay!" said Jonathan, aiding his descent; "you had better take my lantern. It may be useful to you. Perhaps you'll give me in return some token, by which I may remind you of this occurrence, in case we meet again. Your glove will suffice."

"There it is," replied the other, tossing him the glove. "Are you sure these bars touch the ground."

"They come within a yard of it," answered Jonathan.

"Safe!" shouted Darrell, as he effected a secure landing. "Good-night!"

"So," muttered Jonathan, "having started the hare, I'll now unleash the hounds."

With this praiseworthy determination, he was hastening downstairs with the utmost rapidity, when he encountered a female, whom he took in the darkness to be Mrs. Sheppard. The person caught hold of his arm, and, in spite of his efforts to disengage himself, detained him.

"Where is he?" asked she in an agitated whisper. "I heard his voice; but I saw them on the stairs, and durst not approach him, for fear of giving the alarm."

"If you mean the fugitive, Darrell, he has escaped through the back window," replied Jonathan.

"Thank Heaven!" she gasped.

"Well, you women are forgiving creatures, I must say," observed Jonathan, sarcastically. "You thank Heaven for the escape of the man who did his best to get your child's neck twisted."

"What do you mean?" asked the female in astonishment.

"I mean what I say," replied Jonathan. "Perhaps you don't know that this Darrell so contrived matters, that your child should be mistaken for his own; by which means it had a narrow escape from a tight cravat, I can assure you. However, the scheme answered well enough, for Darrell has got off with his own brat."

"Then this is not my child?" exclaimed she, with increasing astonishment.

"If you have a child there, it certainly is not," answered Jonathan, a little surprised; "for I left your brat in the charge of Blueskin, who is still among the crowd in the street, unless, as is not unlikely, he's gone to see your other friend disciplined at the pump."

"Merciful Providence!" exclaimed the female. "Whose child can this be?"

"How the devil should I know?" replied Jonathan

gruffly. "I suppose it didn't drop through the ceiling, did it? Are you quite sure it's flesh and blood?" asked he, playfully pinching its arm till it cried out with pain.

"My child! my child!" exclaimed Mrs. Sheppard, rushing from the adjoining room. "Where is it?"

"Are you the mother of this child?" inquired the person who had first spoken, addressing Mrs. Sheppard.

"I am—I am!" cried the widow, snatching the babe, and pressing it to her breast with rapturous delight. "God be thanked, I have found it."

"We have both good reason to be grateful," added the lady, with great emotion.

"'Sblood!" cried Jonathan, who had listened to the foregoing conversation with angry wonder, "I've been nicely done here. Fool that I was to part with my lantern! But I'll soon set myself straight. What ho! lights! lights!"

And, shouting as he went, he flung himself downstairs.

"Where shall I fly?" exclaimed the lady, bewildered with terror. "They will kill me, if they find me, as they would have killed my husband and child. Oh God! my limbs fail me."

"Make an effort, madam," cried Mrs. Sheppard, as a storm of furious voices resounded from below, and torches were seen mounting the stairs; "they are coming! —they are coming!—fly!—to the roof! to the roof!"

"No," cried the lady, "this room—I recollect—it has a back window."

"It is shut," said Mrs. Sheppard.

"It is open," replied the lady, rushing towards it, and springing through the outlet.

"Where is she?" thundered Jonathan, who at this moment reached Mrs. Sheppard.

"She has flown up-stairs," replied the widow.

"You lie, hussy!" replied Jonathan, rudely pushing her aside, as she vainly endeavored to oppose his entrance into the room; "she is here. Hist!" cried he, as a scream was heard from without. "By G—! she has missed her footing."

There was a momentary and terrible silence, broken only by a few feeble groans.

Sir Cecil, who with Rowland and some others had entered the room, rushed to the window with a torch.

He held down the light, and a moment afterwards beckoned, with a blanched cheek, to Rowland.

"Your sister is dead," said he, in a deep whisper.

"Her blood be upon her own head, then," replied Rowland, sternly. "Why came she here?"

"She could not resist the hand of fate which drew her hither," replied Sir Cecil, mournfully.

"Descend and take charge of the body," said Rowland, conquering his emotion by a great effort. "I will join you in a moment. This accident rather confirms than checks my purpose. The stain upon our family is only half effaced; I have sworn the death of the villain and his bastard, and I will keep my oath. Now, sir," he added, turning to Jonathan, as Sir Cecil and his followers obeyed his injunctions, "you say you know the road which the person whom we seek has taken?"

"I do," replied Jonathan. "But I give no information gratis!"

"Speak, then," said Rowland, placing money in his hand.

"You'll find him at St. Saviour's stairs," answered Jonathan. "He's about to cross the river. You'd better lose no time. He has got five minutes' start of you. But I sent him the longest way about."

The words were scarcely pronounced, when Rowland disappeared.

"And now to see the end of it," said Jonathan, shortly afterwards passing through the window. "Good-night, Master."

Three persons only were left in the room. These were the Master of the Mint, Van Galgebrok, and Mrs. Sheppard.

"A bad business this, Van," observed Baptist, with a prolonged shake of the head.

"Ja, ja, Muntmeester," said the Hollander, shaking his head in reply;—"very bad—very."

"But then they're stanch supporters of our friend over the water," continued Baptist, winking significantly; "so we must e'en hush it up in the best way we can."

"Ja," answered Van Galgebrok. "But—sapperment! —I wish they hadn't broken my pipe."

"Jonathan Wild promises well," observed the Master after a pause: "he'll become a great man. Mind, I, Baptist Kettleby, say so."

"He'll be haanged, nevertheless," replied the Hollander, giving his collar an ugly jerk. "Mind, I, Rykhart Van Galgebrok, predict it. And now let's go back to the Shovels, and finish our brandewyn and bier, Muntmeester."

"Alas!" cried Mrs. Sheppard, relieved by their departure, and giving way to a passionate flood of tears; "were it not for my child, I should wish to be in the place of that unfortunate lady."

CHAPTER V.

THE DENUNCIATION.

For a short space, Mrs. Sheppard remained dissolved in tears. She then dried her eyes, and, laying her child gently upon the floor, knelt down beside him. "Open my heart, Father of Mercy!" she murmured in a humble tone, and with downcast looks, "and make me sensible of the error of my ways. I have sinned deeply; but I have been sorely tried. Spare me yet a little while, Father! not for my own sake, but for the sake of this poor babe." Her utterance was here choked by sobs. "But if it is thy will to take me from him," she continued, as soon as her emotion permitted her,—"if he must be left an orphan amid strangers, implant, I beseech thee, a mother's feelings in some other bosom, and raise up a friend who shall be to him what I would have been. Let him not bear the weight of my punishment. Spare him!—pity me!"

With this she arose, and, taking up the infant, was about to proceed down-stairs, when she was alarmed by hearing the street door opened, and the sound of heavy footsteps entering the house.

"Halloa, widow!" shouted a rough voice from below, "where the devil are you?"

Mrs. Sheppard returned no answer.

"I've got something to say to you," continued the speaker, rather less harshly; "something to your advantage; so come out o' your hiding-place, and let's have some supper, for I'm infernally hungry.—D'ye hear?"

Still the widow remained silent.

"Well, if you won't come, I shall help myself, and that's

unsociable," pursued the speaker, evidently, from the noise he made, suiting the action to the word. "Devilish nice ham you've got here!—capital pie!—and, as I live, a flask of excellent canary. You're in luck to-night, widow. Here's your health in a bumper, and wishing you a better husband than your first. It'll be your own fault if you don't soon get another, and a proper young man into the bargain. Here's his health likewise. What! mum still? You're the first widow I ever heard of who could withstand that lure. I'll try the effect of a jolly stave." And he struck up the following ballad:—

SAINT GILES'S BOWL.*

I.

Where Saint Giles's church stands, once a lazar-house stood;
And chain'd to its gates was a vessel of wood;
A broad-bottom'd bowl from which all the fine fellows,
Who pass'd by that spot, on their way to the gallows,
Might tipple strong beer,
Their spirits to cheer,
And drown in a sea of good liquor, all fear!
For nothing the transit to Tyburn beguiles
So well as a draught from the Bowl of St. Giles!

II.

By many a highwayman many a draught
Of nutty-brown ale at St. Giles's was quaft,
Until the old lazar-house chanced to fall down,
And the broad-bottom'd bowl was removed to the Crown.
Where the robber may cheer,
His spirit with beer,
And drown in a sea of good liquor all fear!
For nothing the transit to Tyburn beguiles
So well as a draught from the Bowl of St. Giles!

* At the hospital of Saint Giles for Lazars, the prisoners conveyed from the City of London towards Tyburn, there to be executed for treasons, felonies, or other trespasses, were presented with a Bowl of Ale, thereof to drink, as their last refreshing in this life.—*Strype's Stow.* Book ix. ch. iii.

III.

There MULSACK and SWIFTNECK, both prigs from their birth,
OLD MOB and TOM COX, took their last draught on earth:
There RANDAL, and SHORTER, and WHITNEY pull'd up,
And jolly JACK JOYCE drank his finishing cup,
For a can of ale calms
A highwayman's qualms,
And makes him sing blithely his dolorous psalms!
And nothing the transit to Tyburn beguiles
So well as a draught from the Bowl of St. Giles!

"Singing's dry work," observed the stranger, pausing to take a pull at the bottle. "And now, widow," he continued, "attend to the next verse, for it concerns a friend o' yours."

IV.

When gallant TOM SHEPPARD to Tyburn was led,
"Stop the cart at the Crown,—stop a moment," he said.
He was offer'd the Bowl, but he left it and smiled,
Crying, "Keep it till called for by JONATHAN WILD,
"The rascal one day
"Will pass by this way,
"And drink a full measure to moisten his clay!
"And never will Bowl of St. Giles have beguiled
"Such a thorough-paced scoundrel as JONATHAN WILD!"

V.

Should it e'er be *my* lot to ride backwards that way,
At the door of the Crown I will certainly stay,
I'll summon the landlord—I'll call for the Bowl,
And drink a deep draught to the health of my soul!
Whatever may hap,
I'll taste of the tap,
I'll keep up my spirits when brought to the crap!
For nothing the transit to Tyburn beguiles
So well as a draught from the Bowl of St. Giles.

"Devil seize the woman!" growled the singer, as he brought his ditty to a close; "will nothing tempt her

out? Widow Sheppard, I say," he added, rising, "don't be afraid. It's only a gentleman come to offer you his hand. 'He that woos a maid,'—fol-de-rol—(hiccuping) I'll soon find you out."

Mrs. Sheppard, whose distress at the consumption of the provisions had been somewhat allayed by the anticipation of the intruder's departure after he had satisfied his appetite, was now terrified in the extreme by seeing a light approach, and hearing footsteps on the stairs. Her first impulse was to fly to the window; and she was about to pass through it, at the risk of sharing the fate of the unfortunate lady, when her arm was grasped by someone in the act of ascending the ladder from without. Uttering a faint scream, she sank backwards, and would have fallen, if it had not been for the interposition of Blueskin, who, at that moment, staggered into the room with a candle in one hand, and the bottle in the other.

"Oh, you're here, are you?" said the ruffian, with an exulting laugh: "I've been looking for you everywhere."

"Let me go," implored Mrs. Sheppard,—"pray, let me go. You hurt the child. Don't you hear how you've made it cry?"

"Throttle the kid!" rejoined Blueskin, fiercely. "If you don't stop it's squalling, I will. I hate children. And, if I'd my own way, I'd drown 'em all like a litter o' puppies."

Well knowing the savage temper of the person she had to deal with, and how likely he was to put his threat into execution, Mrs. Sheppard did not dare to return any answer; but, disengaging herself from his embrace, endeavored meekly to comply with his request.

"And now, widow," continued the ruffian, setting down the candle, and applying his lips to the bottle neck

as he flung his heavy frame upon a bench. "I've a piece o' good news for you."

"Good news will be news to me. What is it?"

"Guess," rejoined Blueskin, attempting to throw a gallant expression into his forbidding countenance.

Mrs. Sheppard trembled violently; and, though she understood his meaning too well, she answered,—"I can't guess."

"Well, then," returned the ruffian, "to put you out of suspense, as the topsman remarked to poor Tom Sheppard afore he turned him off, I'm come to make you an honorable proposal of marriage. You won't refuse me, I'm sure; so no more need be said about the matter. Tomorrow we'll go to the Fleet and get spliced. Don't shake so. What I said about your brat was all stuff. I didn't mean it. It's my way when I'm ruffled. I shall take to him as nat'ral as if he were my own flesh and blood afore long. I'll give him the edication of a prig —teach him the use of his forks betimes—and make him, in the end, as clever a cracksman as his father."

"Never!" shrieked Mrs. Sheppard; "never! never!"

"Halloa! what's this?" demanded Blueskin, springing to his feet. "Do you mean to say that, if I support your kid, I shan't bring him up how I please—eh?"

"Don't question me, but leave me," replied the widow wildly; "you had better."

"Leave you!" echoed the ruffian, with a contemptuous laugh;—"not just yet."

"I am not unprotected," rejoined the poor woman; "there's some one at the window. Help! help!"

But her cries were unheeded. And Blueskin, who, for a moment, had looked round distrustfully, concluding it was a feint, now laughed louder than ever.

"It won't do, widow," said he, drawing near her, while she shrank from his approach, "so you may spare your

breath. Come, come, be reasonable, and listen to me. Your kid has already brought me good luck, and may bring me still more if his edication's attended to. This purse," he added, chinking it in the air, "and this ring, were given me for him just now by the lady, who made a false step on leaving your house. If I'd been in the way, instead of Jonathan Wild, that accident wouldn't have happened."

As he said this, a slight noise was heard without.

"What's that?" ejaculated the ruffian, glancing uneasily towards the window. "Who's there?—Pshaw! it's only the wind."

"It's Jonathan Wild," returned the widow, endeavoring to alarm him. "I told you I was not unprotected."

"*He* protect *you!*" retorted Blueskin, maliciously; "you haven't a worse enemy on the face of the earth than Jonathan Wild. If you'd read your husband's dying speech, you'd know that he laid his death at Jonathan's door—and with reason too, as I can testify."

"Man!" screamed Mrs. Sheppard, with a vehemence that shook even the hardened wretch beside her, "begone, and tempt me not."

"What should I tempt you to?" asked Blueskin, in surprise.

"To—to—no matter what," returned the widow, distractedly. "Go—go!"

"I see what you mean," rejoined Blueskin, tossing a large case-knife, which he took from his pocket, in the air, and catching it dexterously by the haft as it fell: "you owe Jonathan a grudge;—so do I. He hanged your first husband. Just speak the word," he added, drawing the knife significantly across his throat, "and I'll put it out of his power to do the same by your second. But, d—n him; let's talk of something more agreeable. Look at this ring; —it's a diamond, and worth a mint o' money. It shall be

your wedding ring. Look at it, I say. The lady's name's engraved inside, but so small I can scarcely read it. A-L-I-V-A.....Aliva,...T-R-E-N....Trencher....that's it. Aliva Trencher."

"Aliva Trenchard!" exclaimed Mrs. Sheppard, hastily; "is that the name?"

"Ay, ay, now I look again, it *is* Trenchard. How came you to know it? Have you heard the name before?"

"I think I have—long, long ago, when I was a child," replied Mrs. Sheppard, passing her hand across her brow; "but my memory is gone—quite gone. Where *can* I have heard it!"

"Devil knows!" rejoined Blueskin. "Let it pass. The ring's yours, and you're mine. Here, put it on your finger."

Mrs. Sheppard snatched back her hand from his grasp, and exerted all her force to repel his advances.

"Set down the kid," roared Blueskin, savagely.

"Mercy!" screamed Mrs. Sheppard, struggling to escape, and holding the infant at arm's length; "have mercy on this helpless innocent!"

And the child, alarmed by the strife, added its feeble cries to its mother's shrieks.

"Set it down, I tell you," thundered Blueskin, "or I shall do it a mischief."

"Never!" cried Mrs. Sheppard.

Uttering a terrible imprecation, Blueskin placed the knife between his teeth, and endeavored to seize the poor woman by the throat. In the struggle her cap fell off. The ruffian caught hold of her hair, and held her fast. The chamber rang with her shrieks. But her cries, instead of moving her assailant's compassion, only added to his fury. Planting his knee against her side, he pulled her towards him with one hand, while with the other he sought his knife. The child was now within reach; and

in another moment he would have executed his deadly purpose, if an arm from behind had not felled him to the ground.

When Mrs. Sheppard, who had been stricken down by the blow that prostrated her assailant, looked up, she perceived Jonathan Wild kneeling beside the body of Blueskin. He was holding the ring to the light, and narrowly examining the inscription.

"Trenchard," he muttered; "Aliva Trenchard—they were right, then, as to the name. Well, if she survives the accident—as the blood, who styles himself Sir Cecil, fancies she may do—this ring will make my fortune by leading to the discovery of the chief parties concerned in this strange affair."

"Is the poor lady alive?" asked Mrs. Sheppard, eagerly.

"'Sblood!" exclaimed Jonathan, hastily thrusting the ring into his vest, and taking up a heavy horseman's pistol with which he had felled Blueskin,—"I thought you'd been senseless."

"Is she alive?" repeated the widow.

"What's that to you?" demanded Jonathan, gruffly.

"Oh, nothing—nothing," returned Mrs. Sheppard. "But pray tell me if her husband has escaped?"

"Her husband!" echoed Jonathan scornfully. "A *husband* has little to fear from his wife's kinsfolk. Her *lover*, Darrell, has embarked upon the Thames, where, if he's not capsized by the squall (for it's blowing like the devil), he stands a good chance of getting his throat cut by his pursuers—ha! ha! I tracked 'em to the banks of the river, and should have followed to see it out, if the watermen hadn't refused to take me. However, as things have turned up, it's fortunate that I came back."

"It is, indeed," replied Mrs. Sheppard; "most fortunate for me."

"For *you!*" exclaimed Jonathan, "don't flatter yourself

that I'm thinking of you. Blueskin might have butchered you and your brat before I'd have lifted a finger to prevent him, if it hadn't suited my purposes to do so, and *he* hadn't incurred my displeasure. I never forgive an injury. Your husband could have told you that."

"How had he offended you?" inquired the widow.

"I'll tell you," answered Jonathan sternly. "He thwarted my schemes twice. The first time, I overlooked the offense; but the second time, when I had planned to break open the house of his master, the fellow who visited you to-night—Wood the carpenter of Wych Street—he betrayed me. I told him I would bring him to the gallows, and I was as good as my word.

"You were so," replied Mrs. Sheppard; "and for that wicked deed you will one day be brought to the gallows yourself."

"Not before I have conducted your child thither," retorted Jonathan, with a withering look.

"Ah!" ejaculated Mrs. Sheppard, paralyzed by the threat.

"If that sickly brat lives to be a man," continued Jonathan, rising, "I'll hang him upon the same tree as his father."

"Pity!" shrieked the widow.

"I'll be his evil genius!" vociferated Jonathan, who seemed to enjoy her torture.

"Begone, wretch!" cried the mother, stung beyond endurance by his taunts; "or I will drive you hence with my curses."

"Curse on, and welcome," jeered Wild.

Mrs. Sheppard raised her hand, and the malediction trembled upon her tongue. But ere the words could find utterance, her maternal tenderness overcame her indignation; and sinking upon her knees, she extended her arms over her child.

"A mother's prayers—a mother's blessing," she cried, with the fervor almost of inspiration, "will avail against a fiend's malice."

"We shall see," rejoined Jonathan, turning carelessly upon his heel.

And, as he quitted the room, the poor widow fell with her face upon the floor.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STORM.

As soon as he was liberated by his persecutors, Mr. Wood set off at full speed from the Mint, and hurrying, he scarce knew whither (for there was such a continual buzzing in his ears and dancing in his eyes, as almost to take away the power of reflection), he held on at a brisk pace till his strength completely failed him.

On regaining his breath, he began to consider whither chance had led him; and, rubbing his eyes to clear his sight, he perceived a somber pile, with a lofty tower and broad roof, immediately in front of him. This structure at once satisfied him as to where he stood. He knew it to be St. Saviour's Church. As he looked up at the massive tower, the clock tolled forth the hour of midnight. The solemn strokes were immediately answered by a multitude of chimes, sounding across the Thames, amongst which the deep note of St. Paul's was plainly distinguishable. A feeling of inexplicable awe crept over the carpenter as the sounds died away. He trembled, not from any superstitious dread, but from an undefined sense of approaching danger. The peculiar appearance of the sky was not without some influence in awakening these terrors. Over one of the pinnacles of the tower a speck of pallid light marked the position of the moon, then newly born and newly risen. It was still profoundly dark; but the wind, which had begun to blow with some violence, chased the clouds rapidly across the heavens, and dispersed the vapors hanging nearer the earth. Sometimes the moon was totally eclipsed; at

others, it shed a wan and ghastly glimmer over the masses rolling in the firmament. Not a star could be discerned, but, in their stead, streaks of lurid radiance, whence proceeding it was impossible to determine, shot ever and anon athwart the dusky vault, and added to the ominous and threatening appearance of the night.

Alarmed by these prognostications of a storm, and feeling too much exhausted from his late severe treatment to proceed further on foot, Wood endeavored to find a tavern where he might warm and otherwise refresh himself. With this view he struck off into a narrow street on the left, and soon entered a small alehouse, over the door of which hung the sign of the "Welsh Trumpeter."

"Let me have a glass of brandy," said he, addressing the host.

"Too late, master," replied the landlord of the Trumpeter, in a surly tone, for he did not much like the appearance of his customer; "just shut up shop."

"Zounds! David Pugh, don't you know your old friend and countryman?" exclaimed the carpenter.

"Ah! Owen Wood, is it you?" cried David in astonishment. "What the devil makes you out so late? And what has happened to you, man, eh? you seem in a queer plight."

"Give me the brandy, and I'll tell you," replied Wood.

"Here, wife—hostess—fetch me that bottle from the second shelf in the corner cupboard.—There, Mr. Wood," cried David, pouring out a glass of the spirit, and offering it to the carpenter, "that'll warm the cockles of your heart. Don't be afraid, man—off with it. It's right Nantz. I keep it for my own drinking," he added in a lower tone.

Mr. Wood having disposed of the brandy, and pro-

nounced himself much better, hurried close to the fireside, and informed his friend in a few words of the inhospitable treatment he had experienced from the gentlemen of the Mint; whereupon Mr. Pugh, who, as well as the carpenter, was a descendant of Cadwallader, waxed extremely wroth; gave utterance to a number of fierce-sounding imprecations in the Welsh tongue; and was just beginning to express the greatest anxiety to catch some of the rascals at the Trumpeter, when Mr. Wood cut him short by stating his intention of crossing the river as soon as possible, in order to avoid the storm.

"A storm!" exclaimed the landlord. "Gadzooks! I thought something was coming on; for when I looked at the weather-glass an hour ago, it had sunk lower than I ever remember it."

"We shall have a durty night on it, to a sartinty, landlord," observed an old one-eyed sailor, who sat smoking his pipe by the fireside. "The glass never sinks in that way, d'ye see, without a hurricane follerin'. I've knowed it often do so in the West Injees. Moreover, a couple o' porpusses came up with the tide this mornin', and ha' bin flounderin' about i' the Thames abuv Lunnun Bridge all day long; and them say-monsters, you know, always proves sure forerunners of a gale."

"Then the sooner I'm off the better," cried Wood; "what's to pay, David?"

"Don't affront me, Owen, by asking such a question," returned the landlord; "hadn't you better stop and finish the bottle?"

"Not a drop more," replied Wood. "Enough's as good as a feast. Good-night!"

"Well, if you won't be persuaded, and must have a boat, Owen," observed the landlord, "there's a waterman asleep on that bench will help you to as tidy a craft as any on the Thames. Halloa, Ben!" cried he, shaking a

broad-backed fellow, equipped in a short-skirted doublet, and having a badge upon his arm,—"scullers wanted."

"Halloa! my hearty!" cried Ben, starting to his feet.

"This gentleman wants a pair of oars," said the landlord.

"Where to, master?" asked Ben, touching his woolen cap.

"Arundel Stairs," replied Wood, "the nearest point to Wych Street."

"Come along, master," said the waterman.

"Hark'ee, Ben," said the old sailor, knocking the ashes from his pipe upon the hob; "you may try, but dash my timbers if you'll ever cross the Thames to-night."

"And why not, old saltwater?" inquired Ben, turning a quid in his mouth.

"'Cos there's a gale a-getting up as 'll perwent you, young freshwater," replied the tar.

"It must look sharp then, or I shall give it the slip," laughed Ben; "the gale never yet blowed as could perwent my crossing the Thames. The weather's been foul enough for the last fortnight, but I've never turned my back upon it."

"May be not," replied the old sailor, drily; "but you'll find it too stiff for you to-night, anyhow. Howsomdever, if you *should* reach t'other side, take an old feller's advice, and don't be foolhardy enough to venter back again."

"I tell 'ee what, saltwater," said Ben, "I'll lay you my fare—and that 'll be two shillin'—I'm back in an hour."

"Done!" cried the old sailor. "But vere 'll be the use o' vinnin'? you von't live to pay me."

"Never fear," replied Ben, gravely; "dead or alive, I'll pay you, if I lose. There's my thumb upon it. Come along, master."

"I tell 'ee what, landlord," observed the old sailor,

quietly replenishing his pipe from a huge pewter tobacco-box, as the waterman and Wood quitted the house, "you've said good-by to your friend."

"Odd's me! do you think so?" cried the host of the Trumpeter. "I'll run and bring him back. He's a Welshman, and I wouldn't for a trifle that any accident befell him."

"Never mind," said the old sailor, taking up a piece of blazing coal with the tongs, and applying it to his pipe; "let 'em try. They'll be back soon enough—or not at all."

Mr. Wood and the waterman, meanwhile, proceeded in the direction of St. Saviour's stairs. Casting a hasty glance at the old and ruinous prison belonging to the liberty of the Bishop of Winchester (whose palace formerly adjoined the river), called the Clink, which gave its name to the street, along which he walked; and noticing, with some uneasiness, the melancholy manner in which the wind whistled through its barred casements, the carpenter followed his companion down an opening to the right, and presently arrived at the water-side.

Moored to the steps, several wherries were dancing in the rushing current, as if impatient of restraint. Into one of these the waterman jumped, and, having assisted Mr. Wood to a seat within it, immediately pushed from land. Ben had scarcely adjusted his oars, when the gleam of a lantern was seen moving towards the bank. A shout was heard at a little distance, and, the next moment, a person rushed with breathless haste to the stair-head.

"Boat there!" cried a voice, which Mr. Wood fancied he recognized.

"You'll find a waterman asleep under his tilt in one of them ere craft, if you look about, sir," replied Ben, backing water as he spoke.

"Can't you take me with you?" urged the voice; "I'll

make it worth your while. I've a child here whom I wish to convey across the water without loss of time."

"A child!" thought Wood; "it must be the fugitive Darrell. Hold hard," cried he, addressing the waterman; "I'll give the gentleman a lift."

"Unpossible, master," rejoined Ben; "the tide's running down like a mill-sluice, and the wind's right in our teeth. Old saltwater was right. We shall have a regular squall afore we gets across. D'ye hear how the wanes creak on old Winchester House? We shall have a touch on it ourselves presently. But I shall lose my wager if I stay a moment longer—so here goes." Upon which he plunged his oars deeply into the stream, and the bark shot from the strand.

Mr. Wood's anxiety respecting the fugitive was speedily relieved by hearing another waterman busy himself in preparation for starting; and, shortly after, the dip of a second pair of oars sounded upon the river.

"Curse me, if I don't think all the world means to cross the Thames this fine night," observed Ben. "One'd think it rained fares, as well as blowed great guns. Why, there's another party on the stair-head inquiring arter scullers; and, by the mass! they appear in a greater hurry than any on us."

His attention being thus drawn to the bank, the carpenter beheld three figures, one of whom bore a torch, leap into a wherry of a larger size than the others, which immediately put off from shore. Manned by a couple of watermen, who rowed with great swiftness, this wherry dashed through the current in the track of the fugitive, of whom it was evidently in pursuit, and upon whom it perceptibly gained. Mr. Wood strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of the flying skiff. But he could only discern a black and shapeless mass, floating upon the water at a little distance, which, to his bewildered fancy, appeared

absolutely standing still. To the practised eye of the waterman matters wore a very different air. He perceived clearly enough, that the chase was moving quickly; and he was also aware, from the increased rapidity with which the oars were urged, that every exertion was made on board to get out of the reach of her pursuers. At one moment, it seemed as if the flying bark was about to put to shore. But this plan (probably from its danger) was instantly abandoned; not, however, before her momentary hesitation had been taken advantage of by her pursuers, who, redoubling their efforts at this juncture, materially lessened the distance between them.

Ben watched these maneuvers with great interest, and strained every sinew in his frame to keep ahead of the other boats.

"Them's catchpoles, I s'pose, sir, arter the gentleman with a writ?" he observed.

"Something worse, I fear," Wood replied.

"Why, you don't think as how they're crimps, do you?" Ben inquired.

"I don't know what I think," Wood answered sulkily; and he bent his eyes upon the water as if he wished to avert his attention forcibly from the scene.

There is something that inspires a feeling of inexpressible melancholy in sailing on a dark night upon the Thames. The sounds that reach the ear, and the objects that meet the eye, are all calculated to awaken a train of sad and serious contemplation. The ripple of the water against the boat, as its keel cleaves through the stream—the darkling current hurrying by—the indistinctly seen craft, of all forms and all sizes, hovering around, and making their way in ghost-like silence, or warning each other of their approach by cries, that, heard from afar, have something doleful in their note—the solemn shadows cast by the bridges—the deeper gloom of the echo-

ing arches—the lights glimmering from the banks—the red reflection thrown upon the waves by a fire kindled on some stationary barge—the tall and fantastic shapes of the houses as discerned through the obscurity ; these, and other sights and sounds of the same character, give a somber color to the thoughts of one who may choose to indulge in meditation at such a time and in such a place.

But it was otherwise with the carpenter. This was no night for the indulgence of dreamy musing. It was a night of storm and terror, which promised each moment to become more stormy and more terrible. Not a bark could be discerned on the river, except those already mentioned. The darkness was almost palpable ; and the wind which, hitherto, had been blowing in gusts, was suddenly lulled. It was a dead calm. But this calm was more awful than the previous roaring of the blast.

Amid this portentous hush, the report of a pistol reached the carpenter's ears ; and, raising his head at the sound, he beheld a sight which filled him with fresh apprehensions.

By the light of a torch borne at the stern of the hostile wherry, he saw that the pursuers had approached within a short distance of the object of their quest. The shot had taken effect upon the waterman who rowed the chase. He had abandoned his oars, and the boat was drifting with the stream towards the enemy. Escape was now impossible. Darrell stood erect in the bark, with his drawn sword in hand, prepared to repel the attack of his assailants, who, in their turn, seemed to await with impatience the moment which should deliver him into their power.

They had not to tarry long. In another instant the collision took place. The watermen who manned the larger wherry immediately shipped their oars, grappled

with the drifting skiff, and held it fast. Wood, then, beheld two persons, one of whom he recognized as Rowland, spring on board the chase. A fierce struggle ensued. There was a shrill cry, instantly succeeded by a deep splash.

"Put about, waterman, for God's sake!" cried Wood, whose humanity got the better of every personal consideration; "some one is overboard. Give way, and let us render what assistance we can to the poor wretch."

"It's all over with him by this time, master," replied Ben, turning the head of his boat, and rowing swiftly towards the scene of strife; "but, d—n him, he was the chap as hit poor Bill Thomson just now, and I don't much care if he should be food for fishes."

As Ben spoke, they drew near the opposing parties. The contest was now carried on between Rowland and Darrell. The latter had delivered himself from one of his assailants, the attendant, Davies. Hurled over the sides of the skiff, the ruffian speedily found a watery grave. It was a spring-tide at half ebb; and the current which was running fast and furiously, bore him instantly away. While the strife raged between the principals, the watermen in the larger wherry were occupied in stemming the force of the torrent, and endeavoring to keep the boats, they had lashed together, stationary. Owing to this circumstance, Mr. Wood's boat, impelled alike by oar and tide, shot past the mark at which it aimed; and, before it could be again brought about, the struggle had terminated. For a few minutes Darrell seemed to have the advantage in the conflict. Neither combatant could use his sword; and in strength the fugitive was evidently superior to his antagonist. The boat rocked violently with the struggle. Had it not been lashed to the adjoining wherry, it must have been upset, and have precipitated the opponents into the water.

Rowland felt himself sinking beneath the powerful grasp of his enemy. He called to the other attendant who held the torch. Understanding the appeal, the man snatched his master's sword from his grasp, and passed it through Darrell's body. The next moment a heavy plunge told that the fugitive had been consigned to the waves.

Darrell, however, rose again instantly; and, though mortally wounded, made a desperate effort to regain the boat.

"My child!" he groaned, faintly.

"Well reminded," answered Rowland, who had witnessed his struggles with a smile of gratified vengeance; "I had forgotten the accursed imp in this confusion. Take it," he cried, lifting the babe from the bottom of the boat, and flinging it towards its unfortunate father.

The child fell within a short distance of Darrell, who, hearing the splash, struck out in that direction, and caught it before it sank. At this juncture, the sound of oars reached his ears, and he perceived Mr. Wood's boat bearing up towards him.

"Here he is, waterman," exclaimed the benevolent carpenter, "I see him; row for your life!"

"That's the way to miss him, master," replied Ben, coolly, "We must keep still. The tide 'll bring him to us fast enough."

Ben judged correctly. Borne along by the current, Darrell was instantly at the boat's side.

"Seize this oar," vociferated the waterman.

"First take the child," cried Darrell, holding up the infant, and clinging to the oar with a dying effort.

"Give it me," returned the carpenter; "all's safe. Now, lend me your own hand."

"My strength fails me," gasped the fugitive. "I cannot climb the boat. Take my child to—it is—oh God!—I am sinking—take it—take it!"

"Where?" shouted Wood.

Darrell attempted to reply. But he could only utter an inarticulate exclamation. The next moment his grasp relaxed, and he sank to rise no more.

Rowland, meantime, alarmed by the voices, snatched a torch from his attendant, and, holding it over the side of the wherry, witnessed the incident just described.

"Confusion!" cried he; "there is another boat in our wake, they have rescued the child. Loose the wherry, and stand to your oars—quick—quick!"

These commands were promptly obeyed. The boat was set free, and the men resumed their seats. Rowland's purposes were, however, defeated in a manner as unexpected as appalling.

During the foregoing occurrences a dead calm prevailed. But as Rowland sprang to the helm, and gave the signal for pursuit, a roar like a volley of ordnance was heard aloft, and the wind again burst its bondage. A moment before, the surface of the stream was black as ink. It was now whitening, hissing, and seething like an enormous caldron. The blast once more swept over the agitated river: whirled off the sheets of foam, scattered them far and wide in rain-drops, and left the raging torrent blacker than before. The gale had become a hurricane: that hurricane was the most terrible that ever laid waste our city. Destruction everywhere marked its course. Steeples toppled, and towers reeled beneath its fury. Trees were torn up by the roots; many houses were leveled to the ground; others were unroofed; the leads on the churches were ripped off, and "shriveled up like scrolls of parchment." Nothing on land or water was spared by the remorseless gale. Most of the vessels lying in the river were driven from their moorings, dashed tumultuously against each other, or blown ashore. All was darkness, horror, confusion, ruin. Men fled from

their tottering habitations, and returned to them scared by greater dangers. The end of the world seemed at hand.

At this time of universal havoc and despair—when all London quaked at the voice of the storm—the carpenter, who was exposed to its utmost fury, fared better than might have been anticipated. The boat in which he rode was not overset. Fortunately, her course had been shifted immediately after the rescue of the child; and, in consequence of this movement, she received the first shock of the hurricane, which blew from the southwest, upon her stern. Her head dipped deeply into the current, and she narrowly escaped being swamped. Righting, however, instantly afterwards, she scudded with the greatest rapidity over the boiling waves, to whose mercy she was now entirely abandoned. On this fresh outburst of the storm, Wood threw himself instinctively into the bottom of the boat, and, clasping the little orphan to his breast, endeavored to prepare himself to meet his fate.

While he was thus occupied, he felt a rough grasp upon his arm, and presently afterwards Ben's lips approached close to his ear. The waterman sheltered his mouth with his hand while he spoke, or his voice would have been carried away by the violence of the blast.

"It's all up, master," groaned Ben, "nothin' short of a merracle can save us. The boat's sure to run foul o' the bridge; and if she 'scapes stavin' above, she'll be swamped to a sartinty below. There 'll be a fall of above twelve foot o' water, and think o' that on a night as 'ud blow a whole fleet to the devil."

Mr. Wood *did* think of it, and groaned aloud.

"Heaven help us!" he exclaimed; "we were mad to neglect the old sailor's advice."

"That's what troubles me," rejoined Ben. "I tell 'ee what, master, if you're more fortinate nor I am, and get

ashore, give old saltwater your fare. I pledged my thumb that, dead or alive, I'd pay the wager if I lost; and I should like to be as good as my word."

"I will—I will," replied Wood hastily. "Was that thunder?" he faltered, as a terrible clap was heard overhead.

"No; it's only a fresh gale," Ben returned: "hark! now it comes."

"Lord have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!" ejaculated Wood, as a fearful gust dashed the water over the side of the boat, deluging him with spray.

The hurricane had now reached its climax. The blast shrieked, as if exulting in its wrathful mission. Stunning and continuous, the din seemed almost to take away the power of hearing. He who had faced the gale, would have been instantly stifled. Piercing through every crevice in the clothes, it, in some cases, tore them from the wearer's limbs, or from his grasp. It penetrated the skin; benumbed the flesh; paralyzed the faculties. The intense darkness added to the terror of the storm. The destroying angel hurried by, shrouded in his gloomiest apparel. None saw, though all felt his presence, and heard the thunder of his voice. Imagination, colored by the obscurity, peopled the air with phantoms. Ten thousand steeds appeared to be trampling aloft, charged with the work of devastation. Awful shapes seemed to flit by, borne on the wings of the tempest, animating and directing its fury. The actual danger was lost sight of in these wild apprehensions; and many timorous beings were scared beyond reason's verge by the excess of their fears.

This had well-nigh been the case with the carpenter. He was roused from the stupor of despair into which he had sunk by the voice of Ben, who roared in his ear, "The bridge!—the bridge!"

CHAPTER VII.

OLD LONDON BRIDGE.

London, at the period of this history, boasted only a single bridge. But that bridge was more remarkable than any the metropolis now possesses. Covered with houses from one end to the other, this reverend and picturesque structure presented the appearance of a street across the Thames It was as if Gracechurch Street, with all its shops, its magazines, and ceaseless throng of passengers, were stretched from the Middlesex to the Surrey shore. The houses were older, the shops gloomier, and the thoroughfare narrower, it is true; but the bustle, the crowd, the street-like air was the same. Then the bridge had arched gateways, bristling with spikes, and garnished (as all ancient gateways ought to be) with the heads of traitors. In olden days it boasted a chapel, dedicated to St. Thomas; beneath which there was a crypt curiously constructed amid the arches, where "was sepultured Peter, the Chaplain of Colechurch, who began the Stone Bridge at London;" and it still boasted an edifice (though now in rather a tumble-down condition) which had once vied with a palace,—we mean Nonesuch House. The other buildings stood close together in rows; and so valuable was every inch of room accounted, that in many cases cellars, and even habitable apartments, were constructed in the solid masonry of the piers.

Old London bridge (the grandsire of the present erection) was supported on nineteen arches, each of which

Would a Rialto make for depth and height!

The arches stood upon enormous piers; the piers on starlings, or jetties, built far out into the river to break the force of the tide.

Roused by Ben's warning, the carpenter looked up, and could just perceive the dusky outline of the bridge, looming through the darkness, and rendered indistinctly visible by the many lights that twinkled from the windows of the lofty houses. As he gazed at these lights, they suddenly seemed to disappear, and a tremendous shock was felt throughout the frame of the boat. Wood started to his feet. He found that the skiff had been dashed against one of the buttresses of the bridge.

"Jump!" cried Ben, in a voice of thunder.

Wood obeyed. His fears supplied him with unwonted vigor. Though the starling was more than two feet above the level of the water, he alighted with his little charge—which he had never for an instant quitted—in safety upon it. Poor Ben was not so fortunate. Just as he was preparing to follow, the wherry containing Rowland and his men, which had drifted in their wake, was dashed against his boat. The violence of the collision nearly threw him backwards, and caused him to swerve as he sprang. His foot touched the rounded edge of the starling, and glanced off, precipitating him into the water.

As he fell, he caught at the projecting masonry. But the stone was slippery; and the tide, which here began to feel the influence of the fall, was running with frightful velocity. He could not make good his hold. But, uttering a loud cry, he was swept away by the headlong torrent.

Mr. Wood heard the cry. But his own situation was too perilous to admit of his rendering any assistance to the ill-fated waterman. He fancied, indeed, that he beheld a figure spring upon the starling at the moment when the boats came in contact; but, as he could per-

ceive no one near him, he concluded he must have been mistaken.

In order to make Mr. Wood's present position and subsequent proceedings fully intelligible, it may be necessary to give some notion of the shape and structure of the platform on which he had taken refuge. It has been said, that the pier of each arch, or lock of Old London Bridge, was defended from the force of the tide by a huge projecting spur called a starling. These starlings varied in width, according to the bulk of the pier they surrounded. But they were all pretty nearly of the same length, and built somewhat after the model of a boat, having extremities as sharp and pointed as the keel of a canoe. Cased and ribbed with stone, and braced with horizontal beams of timber, the piles, which formed the foundation of these jetties, had resisted the strong encroachments of the current for centuries. Some of them are now buried at the bottom of the Thames. The starling, on which the carpenter stood, was the fourth from the Surrey shore. It might be three yards in width, and a few more in length; but it was covered with ooze and slime, and the waves continually broke over it. The transverse spars before mentioned were as slippery as ice; and the hollows between them were filled ankle-deep with water.

The carpenter threw himself flat upon the starling to avoid the fury of the wind. But in this posture he fared worse than ever. If he ran less risk of being blown over, he stood a much greater chance of being washed off, or stifled. As he lay on his back, he fancied himself gradually slipping off the platform. Springing to his feet in an ecstasy of terror, he stumbled, and had well-nigh realized his worst apprehensions. He, next, tried to clamber up the flying buttresses and soffits of the pier, in the hope of reaching some of the windows and other apertures with which, as a man-of-war is studded with port-holes, the

sides of the bridge were pierced. But this wild scheme was speedily abandoned; and, nerved by despair, the carpenter resolved to hazard an attempt, from the execution, almost from the contemplation, of which he had hitherto shrunk. This was to pass under the arch, along the narrow ledge of the starling, and, if possible, attain the eastern platform, where, protected by the bridge, he would suffer less from the excessive violence of the gale.

Assured, if he remained much longer where he was, he would inevitably perish, Wood recommended himself to the protection of Heaven, and began his perilous course. Carefully sustaining the child which, even in that terrible extremity, he had not the heart to abandon, he fell upon his knees, and, guiding himself with his right hand, crept slowly on. He had scarcely entered the arch, when the indraught was so violent, and the noise of the wind so dreadful and astounding, that he almost determined to relinquish the undertaking. But the love of life prevailed over his fears. He went on.

The ledge, along which he crawled, was about a foot wide. In length the arch exceeded seventy feet. To the poor carpenter it seemed an endless distance. When, by slow and toilsome efforts, he had arrived midway, something obstructed his further progress. It was a huge stone placed there by some workmen occupied in repairing the structure. Cold drops stood upon Wood's brow, as he encountered this obstacle. To return was impossible,—to raise himself certain destruction. He glanced downwards at the impetuous torrent, which he could perceive shooting past him with lightning swiftness in the gloom. He listened to the thunder of the fall, now mingling with the roar of the blast; and, driven almost frantic by what he heard and saw, he pushed with all his force against the stone. To his astonishment and delight it yielded to

the pressure, toppled over the ledge, and sank. Such was the hubbub and tumult around him, that the carpenter could not hear it plunge into the flood. His course, however, was no longer interrupted, and he crept on.

After encountering other dangers, and being twice compelled to fling himself flat upon his face to avoid slipping from the wet and slimy pathway, he was at length about to emerge from the lock, when, to his inexpressible horror, he found he had lost the child!

All the blood in his veins rushed to his heart, and he shook in every limb as he made this discovery. A species of vertigo seized him. His brain reeled. He fancied that the whole fabric of the bridge was cracking overhead —that the arch was tumbling upon him—that the torrent was swelling around him, whirling him off, and about to bury him in the deafening abyss. He shrieked with agony, and clung with desperate tenacity to the roughened stones. But calmer thoughts quickly succeeded. On taxing his recollection, the whole circumstance rushed to mind with painful distinctness. He remembered that, before he attempted to dislodge the stone, he had placed the child in a cavity of the pier, which the granite mass had been intended to fill. This obstacle being removed, in his eagerness to proceed, he had forgotten to take his little charge with him. It was still possible the child might be in safety. And so bitterly did the carpenter reproach himself with his neglect, that he resolved, at all risks, to go back in search of it. Acting upon this humane determination, he impelled himself slowly backwards—for he did not dare to face the blast—and with incredible labor and fatigue reached the crevice. His perseverance was amply rewarded. The child was still safe. It lay undisturbed in the remotest corner of the recess.

So overjoyed was the carpenter with the successful issue of his undertaking, that he scarcely paused a moment to recruit himself; but, securing the child, set out upon his return. Retracing his steps, he arrived, without further accident, at the eastern platform of the starling. As he anticipated, he was here comparatively screened from the fury of the wind; and when he gazed upon the roaring fall beneath him, visible through the darkness in a glistening sheet of foam, his heart overflowed with gratitude for his providential deliverance.

As he moved about upon the starling, Mr. Wood became sensible that he was not alone. Some one was standing beside him. This, then, must be the person whom he had seen spring upon the western platform at the time of the collision between the boats. The carpenter well knew, from the obstacle which had interfered with his own progress, that the unknown could not have passed through the same lock as himself. But he might have crept along the left side of the pier, and beneath the further arch; whereas Wood, as we have seen, took his course upon the right. The darkness prevented the carpenter from discerning the features or figure of the stranger; and the ceaseless din precluded the possibility of holding any communication by words with him. Wood, however, made known his presence to the individual by laying his hand upon his shoulder. The stranger started at the touch, and spoke. But his words were borne away by the driving wind.

Finding all attempts at conversation with his companion in misfortune in vain, Wood, in order to distract his thoughts, looked up at the gigantic structure standing, like a wall of solid darkness, before him. What was his transport on perceiving that a few yards above him a light was burning. The carpenter did not hesitate a moment. He took a handful of the gravelly mud, with

which the platform was covered, and threw the small pebbles, one by one, towards the gleam. A pane of glass was shivered by each stone. The signal of distress was evidently understood. The light disappeared. The window was shortly after opened, and a rope-ladder, with a lighted horn lantern attached to it, let down.

Wood grasped his companion's arm to attract his attention to this unexpected means of escape. The ladder was now within reach. Both advanced towards it, when, by the light of the lantern, Wood beheld, in the countenance of the stranger, the well-remembered and stern features of Rowland.

The carpenter trembled; for he perceived Rowland's gaze fixed first upon the infant, and then on himself.

"It *is* her child!" shrieked Rowland, in a voice heard above the howling of the tempest, "risen from this roaring abyss to torment me. Its parents have perished. And shall their wretched offspring live to blight my hopes, and blast my fame; Never!" And, with these words, he grasped Wood by the throat, and, despite his resistance, dragged him to the very verge of the platform.

At this juncture, a thundering crash was heard against the side of the bridge. A stack of chimneys, on the house above them, had yielded to the storm, and descended in a shower of bricks and stones.

When the carpenter a moment afterwards stretched out his hand, scarcely knowing whether he was alive or dead, he found himself alone. The fatal shower, from which he and his little charge escaped uninjured, had stricken his assailant, and precipitated him into the boiling gulf.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," thought the carpenter, turning his attention to the child, whose feeble struggles and cries proclaimed that, as yet, life had not been extinguished by the hardships it had undergone.

"Poor little creature!" he muttered, pressing it tenderly to his breast, as he grasped the rope and clambered up to the window: "if thou hast, indeed, lost both thy parents, as that terrible man said just now, thou art not wholly friendless and deserted; for I myself will be a father to thee! And in memory of this dreadful night, and the death from which I have been the means of preserving thee, thou shalt bear the name of THAMES DARRELL."

No sooner had Wood crept through the window, than nature gave way, and he fainted. On coming to himself, he found he had been wrapped in a blanket, and put to bed with a couple of hot bricks to his feet. His first inquiries were concerning the child, and he was delighted to find that it still lived and was doing well. Every care had been taken of it, as well as of himself, by the humane inmates of the house in which he had sought shelter.

About noon, next day, he was able to move; and the gale having abated, he set out homewards with his little charge.

The city presented a terrible picture of devastation. London Bridge had suffered a degree less than most places. But it was almost choked up with fallen stacks of chimneys, broken beams of timber, and shattered tiles. The houses overhung in a frightful manner, and looked as if the next gust would precipitate them into the river. With great difficulty, Wood forced a path through the ruins. It was a work of no slight danger, for every instant a wall, or fragment of a building, came crashing to the ground. Thames Street was wholly impassable. Men were going hither and thither—with barrows, and ladders, and ropes—removing the rubbish, and trying to support the tottering habitations. Gracechurch Street was entirely deserted except by a few stragglers, whose curiosity got the better of their fears; or who, like the

carpenter, were compelled to proceed along it. The tiles lay a foot thick in the road. In some cases they were ground almost to powder; in others driven deeply into the earth, as if discharged from a piece of ordnance. The roofs and gables of many of the houses had been torn off. The signs of the shops were carried to incredible distances. Here and there, a building might be seen with the doors and windows driven in, and all access to it prevented by the heaps of bricks and tile-sherds.

Through this confusion the carpenter struggled on—now ascending, now descending the different mountains of rubbish that beset his path, at the imminent peril of his life and limbs, until he arrived in Fleet Street. The hurricane appeared to have raged in this quarter with tenfold fury. Mr. Wood scarcely knew where he was. The old aspect of the place was gone. In lieu of the substantial habitations which he had gazed on overnight, he beheld a row of falling scaffoldings, for such they seemed.

It was a dismal and depressing sight to see a great city thus suddenly overthrown; and the carpenter was deeply moved by the spectacle. As usual, however, on the occasion of any great calamity, a crowd was scouring the streets, whose sole object was plunder. While involved in this crowd, near Temple Bar—where the thoroughfare was most dangerous from the masses of ruin that impeded it—an individual, whose swarthy features recalled to the carpenter one of his tormentors of the previous night, collared him, and, with bitter imprecations, accused him of stealing his child. In vain Wood protested his innocence. The ruffian's companions took his part. And the infant, in all probability, would have been snatched from its preserver, if a posse of the watch (sent out to maintain order and protect property) had not opportunely arrived, and by a vigorous application of

their halberts dispersed his persecutors, and set him at liberty.

Mr. Wood then took to his heels, and never once looked behind him till he reached his own dwelling in Wych Street. His wife met him at the door, and into her hands he delivered his little charge.

END OF THE FIRST EPOCH.

Epoch the Second.

1715.

THAMES DARRELL.

CHAPTER I.

THE IDLE APPRENTICE.

Twelve Years! How many events have occurred during that long interval! how many changes have taken place! The whole aspect of things is altered. The child has sprung into a youth, the youth has become a man; the man has already begun to feel the advances of age. Beauty has bloomed and faded. Fresh flowers of loveliness have budded, expanded, died. The fashions of the day have become antiquated. New customs have prevailed over the old. Parties, politics, and popular opinions have changed. The crown has passed from the brow of one monarch to that of another. Habits and tastes are no longer the same. We, ourselves, are scarcely the same we were twelve years ago.

Twelve years ago! It is an awful retrospect. Dare we look back upon the darkened vista, and in imagination, retrace the path we have trod! With how many vain hopes is it shaded! with how many good resolutions, never fulfilled, is it paved! Where are the dreams of ambition in which, twelve years ago, we indulged?

Where are the aspirations that fired us—the passions that consumed us then? Has our success in life been commensurate with our own desires—with the anticipations formed of us by others? Or, are we not blighted in heart, as in ambition? Has not the loved one been estranged by doubt, or snatched from us by the cold hand of death? Is not the goal, towards which we pressed, further off than ever—the prospect before us cheerless as the blank behind?—Enough of this. Let us proceed with our tale.

Twelve years, then, have elapsed since the date of the occurrences detailed in the preceding division of this history. At that time we were beneath the sway of Anne: we are now at the commencement of the reign of George the First. Passing at a glance over the whole of the intervening period; leaving, in the words of the poet—we

> ———The growth untried
> Of that wide gap—

shall resume our narrative at the beginning of June, 1715.

One Friday afternoon, in this pleasant month, it chanced that Mr. Wood, who had been absent on business during the greater part of the day, returned (perhaps not altogether undesignedly) at an earlier hour than was expected, to his dwelling in Wych Street, Drury Lane; and was about to enter his workshop, when, not hearing any sound of labor issue from within, he began to suspect that an apprentice, of whose habits of industry he entertained some doubt, was neglecting his employment. Impressed with this idea, he paused for a moment to listen. But finding all continue silent, he cautiously lifted the latch, and crept into the room, resolved to punish the offender in case his suspicions should prove correct.

The chamber into which he stole, like all carpenters' workshops, was crowded with the implements and materials of that ancient and honorable art. Saws, hammers, planes, axes, augers, adzes, chisels, gimlets, and an endless variety of tools, were ranged, like a stand of martial weapons at an armory, in racks against the walls. Over these hung levels, bevels, squares, and other instruments of measurement. Amid a litter of nails without heads, screws without worms, and locks without wards, lay a glue-pot and an oil-stone, two articles which their owner was wont to term "his right hand and his left." On a shelf was placed a row of paint-jars; the contents of which had been daubed in rainbow streaks upon the adjacent closet and window-sill. Divers plans and figures were chalked upon the walls; and the spaces between them were filled up with an almanac for the year; a godly ballad, adorned with a rude woodcut, purporting to be "*The History of Chaste Susannah;*" an old print of the Seven Golden Candlesticks; an abstract of the various Acts of Parliament against drinking, swearing, and all manner of profaneness; and a view of the interior of Doctor Daniel Burgess's Presbyterian Meeting-house in Russell Court, with portraits of the reverend gentleman and the principal members of his flock. The floor was thickly strewn with sawdust and shavings; and across the room ran a long and wide bench, furnished at one end with a powerful vice; next to which three nails driven into the boards served, it would appear from the lump of unconsumed tallow left in their custody, as a substitute for a candlestick. On the bench was set a quartern measure of gin, a crust of bread, and a slice of cheese. Attracted by the odor of the latter dainty, a hungry cat had contrived to scratch open the paper in which it was wrapped, displaying the following words in large characters:—"The History of the Four Kings, or Child's

BEST GUIDE TO THE GALLOWS." And, as if to make the moral more obvious, a dirty pack of cards was scattered, underneath, upon the sawdust. Near the door stood a pile of deal planks, behind which the carpenter ensconced himself, in order to reconnoiter, unobserved, the proceedings of his idle apprentice.

Standing on tiptoe, on a joint-stool placed upon the bench, with his back to the door and a clasp-knife in his hand, this youngster, instead of executing his appointed task, was occupied in carving his name upon a beam overhead. Boys, at the time of which we write, were attired like men of their own day, or certain charity-children of ours; and the stripling in question was dressed in black plush breeches, and a gray drugget waistcoat with immoderately long pockets, both of which were evidently the cast-off clothes of some one considerably his senior. Coat on the present occasion he had none, it being more convenient, as well as agreeable to him, to pursue his avocations in his shirt-sleeves; but, when fully equipped, he wore a large-cuffed, long-skirted garment, which had once been the property of his master.

In concealing himself behind the timber, Mr. Wood could not avoid making a slight shuffling sound. The noise startled the apprentice, who instantly suspended his labor, and gazed anxiously in the direction whence he supposed it proceeded. His face was that of a quick, intelligent-looking boy, with fine hazel eyes, and a clear olive complexion. His figure was uncommonly slim even for his age, which could not be more than thirteen; and the looseness of his garb made him appear thinner than he was in reality. But if his frame was immature, his looks were not so. He seemed to possess a penetration and cunning beyond his years—to hide a man's judgment under a boy's mask. The glance which he threw at the door was singularly expressive of his character: it was a

mixture of alarm, effrontery, and resolution. In the end, resolution triumphed, as it was sure to do, over the weaker emotions, and he laughed at his fears. The only part of his otherwise-interesting countenance to which one could decidedly object, was the mouth; a feature that, more than any other, is conceived to betray the animal propensities of the possessor. If this is true, it must be owned that the boy's mouth showed a strong tendency on his part to coarse indulgence. The eyes, too, though large and bright, and shaded by long lashes, seemed to betoken, as hazel eyes generally do in men, a faithless and uncertain disposition. The cheekbones were prominent; the nose slightly depressed, with rather wide nostrils; the chin narrow, but well formed; the forehead broad and lofty; and he possessed such an extraordinary flexibility of muscle in this region, that he could elevate his eyebrows at pleasure up to the very verge of his sleek and shining black hair, which being closely cropped, to admit of his occasionally wearing a wig, gave a singular bullet-shape to his head. Taken altogether, his physiognomy resembled one of those vagabond heads which Murillo delighted to paint, and for which Guzman d'Alfarache, Lazarillo de Tormes, or Estevanillo Gonzalez might have sat:—faces that almost make one in love with roguery, they seem so full of vivacity and enjoyment. There was all the knavery, and more than all the drollery, of a Spanish picaroon in the laughing eyes of the English apprentice, and, with a little more warmth and sunniness of skin on the side of the latter, the resemblance between them would have been complete.

Satisfied, as he thought, that he had nothing to apprehend, the boy resumed his task, chanting, as he plied his knife with redoubled assiduity, the following not inappropriate strains:—

THE NEWGATE STONE.

WHEN CLAUDE DU VAL was in Newgate thrown,
He carved his name on the dungeon stone ;
Quoth a dubsman, who gazed on the shatter'd wall,
" You have carved your epitaph, CLAUDE DU VAL,
With your chisel so fine, tra la!"

"This S wants a little deepening," mused the apprentice, retouching the letter in question; "ay, that's better."

DU VAL was hang'd, and the next who came
On the selfsame stone inscribed his name ;
" Aha ! " quoth the dubsman with devilish glee,
" TOM WATERS, *your* doom is the triple tree !
With your chisel so fine, tra la!"

"Tut, tut, tut!" he cried, "what a fool I am, to be sure! I ought to have cut John, not Jack. However, it don't signify. Nobody ever called me John, that I recollect. So I dare say I was christened Jack. Deuce take it! I was very near spelling my name with one P.

Within the dungeon lay CAPTAIN BEW,
RUMBOLD and WHITNEY—a jolly crew !
All carved their names on the stone, and all
Share the fate of the brave DU VAL !
With their chisels so fine, tra la!'

"Save us!" continued the apprentice, "I hope this beam doesn't resemble the Newgate stone; or I may chance, like the great men the song speaks of, to swing on the Tyburn tree for my pains. No fear o' that.—Though, if my name should become as famous as theirs, it wouldn't much matter. The prospect of the gallows would never deter me from taking to the road, if I were so inclined.

Full twenty highwaymen blithe and bold,
Rattled their chains in that dungeon old ;

Of all that number there 'scaped not one
Who carved his name on the Newgate stone,
With his chisel so fine, tra la!

"There!" cried the boy, leaping from the stool, and drawing back a few paces on the bench to examine his performance—"that'll do. Claude du Val, himself, couldn't have carved it better—ha! ha!"

The name inscribed upon the beam (of which, as it has been carefully preserved by the subsequent owners of Mr. Wood's habitation in Wych Street, we are luckily enabled to furnish a facsimile) was—

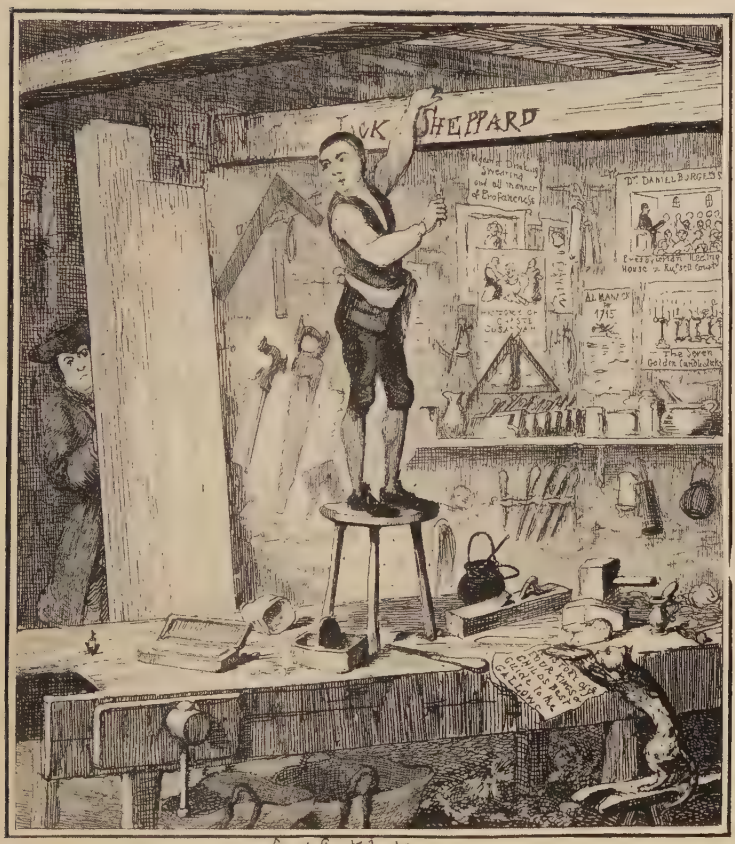
"I've half a mind to give old Wood the slip, and turn highwayman," cried Jack, as he closed the knife, and put it in his pocket.

"The devil you have!" thundered a voice from behind, that filled the apprentice with dismay. "Come down, sirrah! and I'll teach you how to deface my walls in future. Come down, I say, instantly, or I'll make you!" Upon which, Mr. Wood caught hold of Jack's leg, and dragged him off the bench.

"And so you'll turn highwayman, will you, you young dog?" continued the carpenter, cuffing him soundly—"rob the mails, like Jack Hall, I suppose?"

"Yes, I will," replied Jack, sullenly, "if you beat me in that way."

Amazed at the boy's assurance, Wood left off boxing his ears for a moment, and, looking at him steadfastly, said in a grave tone, "Jack, Jack, you'll come to be hanged!"



George Cruikshank

THE NAME ON THE BEAM

"Better be hanged than henpecked," retorted the lad with a malicious grin.

"What do you mean by that, sirrah?" cried Wood, reddening with anger. "Do you dare to insinuate that Mrs. Wood governs me?"

"It's plain you can't govern yourself, at all events," replied Jack, coolly; "but, be that as it may, I won't be struck for nothing."

"Nothing!" echoed Wood, furiously. "Do you call neglecting your work, and singing flash songs, nothing? Is your recent idle discourse, and your present unblushing insolence, nothing? Zounds! you incorrigible rascal, many a master would have taken you before a magistrate, and prayed for your solitary confinement in Bridewell for the least of these offenses. But I'll be more lenient, and content myself with merely chastising you, on condition——"

"You may do as you please, master," interrupted Jack, thrusting his hand into his pocket as if in search of the knife; "but I wouldn't advise you to lay hands on me again."

Mr. Wood glanced at the hardy offender, and, not liking the expression of his countenance, thought it advisable to postpone the execution of his threats to a more favorable opportunity. So, by way of gaining time, he resolved to question him further.

"Where did you learn the song I heard just now?" he demanded, in an authoritative tone.

"At the Black Lion, in our street," replied Jack, without hesitation.

"The worst house in the neighborhood, the constant haunt of reprobates and thieves," groaned Wood. "And who taught it you—the landlord, Joe Hind?"

"No; one Blueskin, a fellow who frequents the Lion," answered Jack, with a degree of candor that astonished

his master nearly as much as his confidence. "It was that song that put it into my head to cut my name on the beam."

"A white wall is a fool's paper, Jack—remember that," rejoined Wood. "Pretty company for an apprentice to keep!—pretty houses for an apprentice to frequent! Why, the rascal you mention is a notorious housebreaker. He was tried at the last Old Bailey sessions, and only escaped the gallows by impeaching his accomplices. Jonathan Wild brought him off."

"Do you happen to know Jonathan Wild, master?" inquired Jack, altering his tone, and assuming a more respectful demeanor.

"I've seen him some years ago, I believe," answered Wood; "and, though he must be much changed by this time, I dare say I should know him again."

"A short man, isn't he, about your height, sir—with a yellow beard, and a face as sly as a fox's?"

"Hem!" replied Wood, coughing slightly to conceal a smile; "the description's not amiss. But why do you ask?"

"Because——" stammered the boy.

"Speak out—don't be alarmed," said Wood, in a kind and encouraging tone. "If you've done wrong, confess it, and I'll forgive you!"

"I don't deserve to be forgiven!" returned Jack, bursting into tears; "for I'm afraid I've done very wrong. Do you know this, sir?" he added, taking a key from his pocket.

"Where did you find it!" asked Wood.

"It was given me by a man who was drinking t'other night with Blueskin at the Lion! and who, though he slouched his hat over his eyes, and muffled his chin in a handkerchief, must have been Jonathan Wild."

"Where did *he* get it?" inquired Wood, in surprise.

"That I can't say. But he promised to give me a couple of guineas if I'd ascertain whether it fitted your locks."

"Zounds!" exclaimed Wood; "it's my old master-key. This key," he added, taking it from the boy, "was purloined from me by your father, Jack. What he intended to do with it is of little consequence now. But, before he suffered at Tyburn, he charged your mother to restore it. She lost it in the Mint. Jonathan Wild must have stolen it from her."

"He must," exclaimed Jack, hastily; "but only let me have it till to-morrow, and if I don't entrap him in a snare from which, with all his cunning, he shall find it difficult to escape, my name's not Jack Sheppard."

"I see through your design, Jack," returned the carpenter, gravely. "But I don't like underhand work. Even when you've a knave to deal with, let your actions be plain and above-board. That's my maxim; and it's the maxim of every honest man. It would be a great matter, I must own, to bring Jonathan Wild to justice. But I can't consent to the course you would pursue—at least, not till I've given it due consideration. In regard to yourself, you've had a very narrow escape. Wild's intention, doubtless, was to use you as far as he found necessary, and then to sell you. Let this be a caution to you in future—with whom and about what you deal. We're told, that 'Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul.' Avoid taverns and bad company, and you may yet do well. You promise to become a first-rate workman. But you want one quality, without which all others are valueless. You want industry—you want steadiness. Idleness is the key of beggary, Jack. If you don't conquer this disgraceful propensity in time, you'll soon come to want; and then nothing can save you. Be

warned by your father's fate. As you brew so must you drink. I've engaged to watch over you as a son, and I *will* do so as far as I'm able; but if you neglect my advice, what chance have I of benefiting you?" On one point I've made up my mind—you shall either obey me, or leave me. Please yourself. Here are your indentures, if you choose to seek another master."

"I *will* obey you, master,—indeed I will!" implored Jack, seriously alarmed at the carpenter's calm displeasure.

"We shall see. Good words, without deeds, are rushes and reeds. And now take away those cards, and never let me see them again. Drive away the cat; throw that measure of gin through the window; and tell me why you've not so much as touched the packing-case for Lady Trafford, which I particularly desired you to complete against my return. It must be sent home this evening. She leaves town to-morrow."

"It shall be ready in two hours," answered Jack, seizing a piece of wood and a plane; "it isn't more than four o'clock. I'll engage to get the job done by six. I didn't expect you home before that hour, sir."

"Ah, Jack!" said Wood, shaking his head, "where there's a will there's a way. You can do anything you please. I wish I could get you to imitate Thames Darrell."

"I'm sure I understand the business of a carpenter much better than he does," replied Jack, adroitly adjusting the board, and using the plane with the greatest rapidity.

"Perhaps," replied Wood, doubtfully.

"Thames was always your favorite," observed Jack, as he fastened another piece of wood on the teeth of the iron stopper.

"I've made no distinction between you, hitherto,"

answered Wood; "nor shall I do so, unless I'm compelled."

"I've had the hard work to do, at all events," rejoined Jack. "But I won't complain. I'd do anything for Thames Darrell."

"And Thames Darrell would do anything for you, Jack," replied a blithe voice. "What's the matter, father?" continued the newcomer, addressing Wood. "Has Jack displeased you? If so, overlook his fault this once. I'm sure he'll do his best to content you. Won't you, Jack?"

"That I will," answered Sheppard, eagerly.

"When it thunders, the thief becomes honest," muttered Wood.

"Can I help you, Jack?" asked Thames, taking up a plane.

"No, no, let him alone," interposed Wood. "He has undertaken to finish this job by six o'clock, and I wish to see whether he'll be as good as his word."

"He'll have hard work to do it by that time, father," remonstrated Thames; "you'd better let me help him."

"On no account!" rejoined Wood, peremptorily. "A little extra exertion will teach him the advantage of diligence at the proper season. Lost ground must be regained. I need scarcely ask whether you've executed your appointed task, my dear! You're never behindhand."

Thames turned away at the question, which he felt might be construed into a reproach. But Sheppard answered for him.

"Darrell's job was done early this morning," he said; "and, if I'd attended to his advice, the packing-case would have been finished at the same time."

"You trusted too much to your own skill, Jack," rejoined Thames. "If I could work as fast as you, I might

afford to be as idle. See how he gets on, father," he added, appealing to Wood: "the box seems to grow under his hands."

"You're a noble-hearted little fellow, Thames," rejoined Wood, casting a look of pride and affection at his adopted son, whose head he gently patted; "and give promise of a glorious manhood."

Thames Darrell was indeed a youth of whom a person of far greater worldly consequence than the worthy carpenter might have been justly proud. Though a few months younger than his companion, Jack Sheppard, he was half a head taller, and much more robustly formed. The two friends contrasted strikingly with each other. In Darrell's open features, frankness and honor were written in legible characters; while, in Jack's physiognomy, cunning and knavery were as strongly imprinted. In all other respects they differed as materially. Jack could hardly be accounted good-looking; Thames, on the contrary, was one of the handsomest boys possible. Jack's complexion was that of a gipsy; Darrell's as fresh and bright as a rose. Jack's mouth was coarse and large; Darrell's small and exquisitely carved, with the short proud upper lip which belongs to the highest order of beauty. Jack's nose was broad and flat; Darrell's straight and fine as that of Antinous. The expression pervading the countenance of the one was vulgarity; of the other, that which is rarely found, except in persons of high birth. Darrell's eyes were of that clear gray which it is difficult to distinguish from blue by day and black at night; and his rich brown hair, which he could not consent to part with, even on the promise of a new and modish peruke from his adopted father, fell in thick glossy ringlets upon his shoulders; whereas Jack's close black crop imparted the peculiar bullet-shape we have noticed to his head.

While Thames modestly expressed a hope that he might not belie the carpenter's favorable prediction, Jack Sheppard thought fit to mount a small ladder placed against the wall, and springing, with the agility of an ape, upon a sort of frame, contrived to sustain short spars and blocks of timber, began to search about for a piece of wood, required in the work on which he was engaged. Being in a great hurry, he took little heed where he set his feet; and a board giving way, he must have fallen if he had not grasped a large plank laid upon the transverse beam immediately over his head.

"Take care, Jack!" shouted Thames, who witnessed the occurrence; "that plank isn't properly balanced. You'll have it down."

But the caution came too late. Sheppard's weight had destroyed the equilibrium of the plank: it swerved, and slowly descended. Losing his presence of mind, Jack quitted his hold, and dropped upon the frame. The plank hung over his head. A moment more, and he would have been crushed beneath the ponderous board, when a slight but strong arm arrested its descent.

"Get from under it, Jack!" vociferated Thames. "I can't hold it much longer—it'll break my wrist. Down we come!" he exclaimed, letting go the plank, which fell with a crash, and leaping after Sheppard, who had rolled off the frame.

All this was the work of a minute.

"No bones broken, I hope?" said Thames, laughing at Jack, who limped towards the bench, rubbing his shins as he went.

"All right," replied Sheppard with affected indifference.

"It's a mercy you both escaped!" ejaculated Wood, only just finding his tongue. "I declare I'm all in a cold sweat. How came you, sir," he continued, addressing

Sheppard, "to venture upon that frame? I always told you some accident would happen."

"Don't scold him, father," interposed Thames; "he's been frightened enough already."

"Well, well, since you desire it I'll say no more," returned Wood. "You haven't hurt your arm, I trust, my dear?" he added, anxiously.

"Only sprained it a little, that's all," answered Thames; "the pain will go off presently."

"Then you *are* hurt," cried the carpenter in alarm. "Come down-stairs directly, and let your mother look at your wrist. She has an excellent remedy for a sprain. And do you, Jack, attend to your work, and mind you don't get into further mischief."

"Hadn't Jack better go with us?" said Thames. "His shin may need rubbing."

"By no means," rejoined Wood, hastily. "A little suffering will do him good. I meant to give him a drubbing. That bruise will answer the same purpose."

"Thames," said Sheppard in a low voice, as he threw a vindictive glance at the carpenter, "I sha'n't forget this. You've saved my life."

"Pshaw! you'd do as much for me any day, and think no more about it. It'll be your turn to save mine next."

"True, and I sha'n't be easy till my turn arrives."

"I tell you what, Jack," whispered Thames, who had noticed Sheppard's menacing glance, and dreaded some further indiscretion on his part, "if you really wish to oblige me, you'll get that packing-case finished by six o'clock. You *can* do it, if you will."

"And I *will*, if I can, depend upon it," answered Sheppard with a laugh.

So saying, he manfully resumed his work; while Wood and Thames quitted the room, and went down-stairs.

CHAPTER II.

THAMES DARRELL.

Thames Darrell's arm having been submitted to the scrutiny of Mrs. Wood, was pronounced by that lady to be very much sprained; and she, forthwith, proceeded to bathe it with a reddish-colored lotion. During this operation, the carpenter underwent a severe catechism as to the cause of the accident; and, on learning that the mischance originated with Jack Sheppard, the indignation of his helpmate knew no bounds, and she was with difficulty prevented from flying to the workshop to inflict summary punishment on the offender.

"I knew how it would be," she cried, in the shrill voice peculiar to a shrew, "when you brought that worthless hussy's worthless brat into the house. I told you no good would come of it. And every day's experience proves that I was right. But, like all your overbearing sex, you must have your own way. You'll never be guided by me —never!"

"Indeed, my love, you're entirely mistaken," returned the carpenter, endeavoring to deprecate his wife's rising resentment by the softest looks and the meekest deportment.

So far, however, was this submission from producing the desired effect, that it seemed only to lend additional fuel to her displeasure. Forgetting her occupation in her anger, she left off bathing Darrell's wrist; and, squeezing his arm so tightly that the boy winced with pain, she clapped her right hand upon her hip, and turned, with flashing eyes and inflamed countenance, towards her crestfallen spouse.

"What!" she exclaimed, almost choked with passion —"*I* advised you to burthen yourself with that idle and good-for-nothing pauper, whom you ought rather to send to the workhouse than maintain at your own expense, did I? *I* advised you to take him as an apprentice; and, so far from getting the regular fee with him, to give him a salary? *I* advised you to feed him, and clothe him, and treat him like his betters; to put up with his insolence, and wink at his faults? *I* counseled all this, I suppose. You'll tell me next, I dare say, that I recommended you to go and visit his mother so frequently under the plea of charity; to give her wine, and provisions, and money; to remove her from the only fit quarters for such people—the Mint; and to place her in a cottage at Willesden, of which you must needs pay the rent? Marry, come up! charity should begin at home. A discreet husband would leave the dispensation of his bounty, where women are concerned, to his wife. And for my part, if I were inclined to exercise my benevolence at all, it should be in favor of some more deserving object than that whining, hypocritical Magdalene."

"It was the knowledge of this feeling on your part, my love, that made me act without your express sanction. I did all for the best, I'm sure. Mrs. Sheppard is——"

"I know what Mrs. Sheppard is, without your information, sir. I haven't forgotten her previous history. You've your own reasons, no doubt, for bringing up her son—perhaps I ought rather to say, *your* son—Mr. Wood."

"Really, my love, these accusations are most groundless —this violence is most unnecessary."

"I can't endure the odious baggage. I hope I may never come near her."

"I hope you never may, my love," humbly acquiesced the carpenter.

"Is my house to be made a receptacle for all your natural children, sir? Answer me that."

"Winny," said Thames, whose glowing cheek attested the effect produced upon him by the insinuation; "Winny," said he, addressing a pretty little damsel of some twelve years of age, who stood by his side holding the bottle of embrocation, "help me on with my coat, please. This is no place for me."

"Sit down, my dear, sit down," interposed Mrs. Wood, softening her asperity. "What I said about natural children doesn't apply to *you*. Don't suppose," she added with a scornful glance at her helpmate, "that I would pay him the compliment of thinking he could possibly be the father of such a boy as you."

Mr. Wood lifted up his hands in mute despair.

"Owen, Owen," pursued Mrs. Wood, sinking into a chair, and fanning herself violently—"what a fluster you have put me into with your violence, to be sure! And at the very time, too, when you know I'm expecting a visit from Mr. Kneebone, on his return from Manchester. I wouldn't have him see me in this state for the world. He'd never forgive you."

"Poh, poh, my dear! Mr. Kneebone invariably takes part with me, when any trifling misunderstanding arises between us. I only wish he was not a Papist and a Jacobite."

"Jacobite!" echoed Mrs. Wood. "Marry, come up! Mightn't he just as reasonably complain of your being a Hanoverian and a Presbyterian? It's all matter of opinion. And now, my love," she added, with a relenting look, "I'm content to make up our quarrel. But you must promise me not to go near that abandoned hussy at Willesden. One can't help being jealous, you know, even of an unworthy object."

Glad to make peace on any terms, Mr. Wood gave the

required promise, though he could not help thinking that, if either of them had cause to be jealous, he was the party.

And here, we may be permitted to offer an observation upon the peculiar and unaccountable influence which ladies of a shrewish turn so frequently exercise over—we can scarcely, in this case, say—their lords and masters; an influence which seems not merely to extend to the will of the husband, but even to his inclinations. We do not remember to have met with a single individual, reported to be under petticoat government, who was not content with his lot—nay, who, so far from repining, did not exult in his servitude; and we see no way of accounting for this apparently inexplicable conduct—for which, among other phenomena of married life, various reasons have been assigned, though none entirely satisfactory to us—except upon the ground that these domineering dames possess some charm sufficiently strong to counteract the irritating effect of their tempers; some secret and attractive quality, of which the world at large is in ignorance, and with which their husbands alone can be supposed to be acquainted. An influence of this description appeared to be exerted on the present occasion. The worthy carpenter was restored to instant good-humor by a glance from his helpmate; and, notwithstanding the infliction he had just endured, he would have quarreled with any one who had endeavored to persuade him that he was not the happiest of men, and Mrs. Wood the best of wives.

"Women must have their wills while they live, since they can make none when they die," observed Wood, as he imprinted a kiss of reconciliation on the plump hand of his consort;—a sentiment to the correctness of which the party chiefly interested graciously vouchsafed her assent.

Lest the carpenter should be taxed with too much uxoriousness, it behooves us to ascertain whether the personal attractions of his helpmate would, in any degree, justify the devotion he displayed. In the first place, Mrs. Wood had the advantage of her husband in point of years, being on the sunny side of forty—a period pronounced by competent judges to be the most fascinating, and at the same time most critical, epoch of woman's existence ; whereas he was on the shady side of fifty—a term of life not generally conceived to have any special recommendation in female eyes. In the next place, she really had some pretensions to beauty. Accounted extremely pretty in her youth, her features and person expanded as she grew older, without much detriment to their original comeliness. Hers was beauty on a large scale, no doubt ; but it was beauty, nevertheless : and the carpenter thought her eyes as bright, her complexion as blooming, and her figure (if a little more buxom) quite as captivating as when he led her to the altar some twenty years ago.

On the present occasion, in anticipation of Mr. Kneebone's visit, Mrs. Wood was dressed with more than ordinary care, and in more than ordinary finery. A dove-colored kincob gown, embroidered with large trees, and made very low in front, displayed to the greatest possible advantage the rounded proportions of her figure ; while a high-heeled, red-leather shoe did not detract from the symmetry of a very neat ankle, and a very small foot. A stomacher, fastened by imitation-diamond buckles, girded that part of her person which should have been a waist ; a coral necklace encircled her throat, and a few black patches, or mouches as they were termed, served as a foil to the bloom of her cheek and chin. Upon a table, where they had been hastily deposited on the intelligence of Darrell's accident, lay a pair of pink kid gloves, bor-

dered with lace, and an enormous fan ; the latter, when opened, represented the metamorphosis and death of Actæon. From her stomacher, to which it was attached by a multitude of glittering steel chains, depended an immense turnip-shaped watch, in a pinchbeck case. Her hair was gathered up behind, in a sort of pad, according to the then prevailing mode ; and she wore a muslin cap, and pinners, with crow-foot edging. A black silk fur-belowed scarf covered her shoulders ; and over the kincob gown hung a yellow satin apron, trimmed with white Persian.

But, in spite of her attractions, we shall address ourselves to the younger and more interesting couple.

"I could almost find in my heart to quarrel with Jack Sheppard for occasioning you so much pain," observed little Winifred Wood, as, having completed her ministration to the best of her ability, she helped Thames on with his coat.

"I don't think you could find in your heart to quarrel with any one, Winny; much less with a person whom I like so much as Jack Sheppard. My arm's nearly well again. And I've already told you the accident was not Jack's fault. So, let's think no more about it."

"It's strange you should like Jack so much, dear Thames. He doesn't resemble you at all."

"The very reason why I like him, Winny. If he *did* resemble me, I shouldn't care about him. And, whatever you may think, I assure you, Jack's a downright good-natured fellow."

Good-natured fellows are always especial favorites with boys. And, in applying the term to his friend, Thames meant to pay him a high compliment. And so Winifred understood him.

"Well," she said, in reply, "I may have done Jack an injustice. I'll try to think better of him in future."

"And, if you want an additional inducement to do so, I can tell you there's no one—not even his mother—whom he loves so well as you."

"Loves!" echoed Winifred, slightly coloring.

"Yes, loves, Winny. Poor fellow! he sometimes indulges the hope of marrying you when he grows old enough."

"Thames!"

"Have I said anything to offend you?"

"Oh no! But if you wouldn't have me positively dislike Jack Sheppard, you'll never mention such a subject again. Besides," she added, blushing yet more deeply, "it isn't a proper one to talk upon."

"Well, then, to change it," replied Thames, gravely, "suppose I should be obliged to leave you."

Winifred looked as if she could not indulge such a supposition for a single moment.

"Surely," she said, after a pause, "You don't attach any importance to what my mother has just said. *She* has already forgotten it."

"But *I* never can forget it, Winny. I will no longer be a burthen to those upon whom I have no claim but compassion."

As he said this, in a low and mournful, but firm voice, the tears gathered thickly in Winifred's dark eyelashes.

"If you are in earnest, Thames," she replied, with a look of gentle reproach, "you are very foolish; and, if in jest, very cruel. My mother, I'm sure, didn't intend to hurt your feelings. She loves you too well for that. And, I'll answer for it, she'll never say a syllable to annoy you again."

Thames tried to answer her, but his voice failed him.

"Come! I see the storm has blown over," cried Winifred, brightening up."

"You're mistaken, Winny. Nothing can alter my determination. I shall quit this roof to-morrow,"

The little girl's countenance fell.

"Do nothing without consulting my father—*your* father, Thames," she implored. "Promise me that."

"Willingly. And, what's more, I promise to abide by his decision."

"Then, I'm quite easy," cried Winifred, joyfully.

"I'm sure he won't attempt to prevent me," rejoined Thames.

The slight smile that played upon Winifred's lips seemed to say that *she* was not quite so sure. But she made no answer.

"In case he should consent——"

"He never will," interrupted Winifred.

"In case he *should*, I say," continued Thames, "will *you* promise to let Jack Sheppard take my place in your affections, Winny?"

"Never!" replied the little damsel. "I can never love any one so much as you."

"Excepting your father."

Winifred was going to say "No," but she checked herself; and, with cheeks mantling with blushes, murmured, "I wish you wouldn't tease me about Jack Sheppard."

The foregoing conversation, having been conducted throughout in a low tone, and apart, had not reached the ears of Mr. and Mrs. Wood, who were, furthermore, engaged in a little conjugal *tête-à-tête* of their own. The last observation, however, caught the attention of the carpenter's wife.

"What's that you're saying about Jack Sheppard?" she cried.

"Thames was just observing——"

"Thames!" echoed Mrs. Wood, glancing angrily at her husband. "There's another instance of your wilful-

ness and want of taste. Who but *you* would have dreamed of giving the boy such a name? Why, it's the name of a river, not a Christian. No gentleman was ever called Thames, and Darrell *is* a gentleman, unless the whole story of his being found in the river is a fabrication!"

"My dear, you forget——"

"No, Mr. Wood, I forget nothing. I've an excellent memory, thank God! And I perfectly remember that everybody was drowned upon that occasion—except yourself and the child!"

"My love, you're beside yourself——"

"I *was* beside myself to take charge of your——"

"Mother!" interposed Winifred.

"It's of no use," observed Thames quietly, but with a look that chilled the little damsel's heart;—"My resolution is taken."

"You at least appear to forget that Mr. Kneebone is coming, my dear," ventured Mr. Wood.

"Good gracious! so I do," exclaimed his amiable consort. "But you do agitate me so much. Come into the parlor, Winifred, and dry your eyes directly, or I'll send you to bed. Mr. Wood, I desire you will put on your best things, and join us as soon as possible. Thames, you needn't tidy yourself, as you've hurt your arm. Mr. Kneebone will excuse you. Dear me! if there isn't his knock. Oh! I'm in such a fluster!"

Upon which, she snatched up her fan, cast a look into the glass, smoothed down her scarf, threw a soft expression into her features, and led the way into the next room, whither she was followed by her daughter and Thames Darrell.

CHAPTER III.

THE JACOBITE.

Mr. William Kneebone was a woolen-draper of "credit and renown," whose place of business was held at the sign of the Angel (for in those days every shop had its sign), opposite Saint Clement's church in the Strand. A native of Manchester, he was the son of Kenelm Kneebone, a stanch Catholic, and a sergeant of dragoons, who lost his legs and his life while fighting for James the Second at the battle of the Boyne, and who had little to bequeath his son except his laurels and his loyalty to the house of Stuart.

The gallant woolen-draper was now in his thirty-sixth year. He had a handsome, jolly-looking face; stood six feet two in his stockings, and measured more than a cloth-yard shaft across the shoulders—athletic proportions derived from his father the dragoon. And, if it had not been for a taste for plotting, which was continually getting him into scrapes, he might have been accounted a respectable member of society.

Of late, however, his plotting had assumed a more dark and dangerous complexion. The times were such that, with the opinions he entertained, he could not remain idle. The spirit of disaffection was busy throughout the kingdom. It was on the eve of that memorable rebellion which broke forth, two months later, in Scotland. Since the accession of George the First to the throne in the preceding year, every effort had been made by the partisans of the Stuarts to shake the credit of the existing government, and to gain supporters to their cause. Disappointed

in their hopes of the restoration of the fallen dynasty after the death of Anne, the adherents of the Chevalier de Saint George endeavored, by sowing the seeds of dissension far and wide, to produce a general insurrection in his favor. No means were neglected to accomplish this end. Agents were dispersed in all directions—offers the most tempting held out to induce the wavering to join the Chevalier's standard. Plots were hatched in the provinces, where many of the old and wealthy Catholic families resided, whose zeal for the martyr of their religion (as the Chevalier was esteemed), sharpened by the persecutions they themselves endured, rendered them hearty and efficient allies. Arms, horses, and accouterments were secretly purchased and distributed; and it is not improbable that, if the unfortunate prince, in whose behalf these exertions were made, and who was not deficient in courage, as he proved at the battle of Malplaquet, had boldly placed himself at the head of his party at an earlier period, he might have regained the crown of his ancestors. But the indecision, which had been fatal to his race, was fatal to him. He delayed the blow till the fortunate conjuncture was past. And when, at length, it *was* struck, he wanted energy to pursue his advantages.

But we must not anticipate the course of events. At the precise period of this history, the Jacobite party was full of hope and confidence. Louis the Fourteenth yet lived, and expectations were, therefore, indulged of assistance from France. The disgrace of the leaders of the late Tory administration had strengthened, rather than injured, their cause. Mobs were gathered together on the slightest possible pretext; and these tumultuous assemblages, while committing the most outrageous excesses, loudly proclaimed their hatred to the house of Hanover, and their determination to cut off the Protestant succes-

sion. The proceedings of this faction were narrowly watched by a vigilant and sagacious administration. The government was not deceived (indeed, every opportunity was sought by the Jacobites of parading their numbers) as to the force of its enemies; and precautionary measures were taken to defeat their designs. On the very day of which we write, namely, the 10th of June, 1715, Bolingbroke and Oxford were impeached of high treason. The Committee of Secrecy—that English Council of Ten—were sitting, with Walpole at their head; and the most extraordinary discoveries were reported to be made. On the same day, moreover, which, by a curious coincidence, was the birthday of the Chevalier de Saint George, mobs were collected together in the streets, and the health of that prince was publicly drunk under the title of James the Third; while, in many country towns, the bells were rung, and rejoicings held, as if for a reigning monarch:—the cry of the populace almost universally being, "No King George, but a Stuart!"

The adherents of the Chevalier de Saint George, we have said, were lavish in promises to their proselytes. Posts were offered to all who chose to accept them. Blank commissions, signed by the prince, to be filled up by the name of the person who could raise a troop for his service, were liberally bestowed. Amongst others, Mr. Kneebone, whose interest was not inconsiderable with the leaders of his faction, obtained an appointment as captain in a regiment of infantry, on the conditions above specified. With a view to raise recruits for his corps, the warlike woolen-draper started for Lancashire, under the color of a journey on business. He was pretty successful in Manchester—a town which may be said to have been the headquarters of the disaffected. On his return to London, he found that applications had been made from a somewhat doubtful quarter by two individ-

uals, for the posts of subordinate officers in his troop. Mr. Kneebone, or, as he would have preferred being styled, Captain Kneebone, was not perfectly satisfied with the recommendations forwarded by the applicants. But this was not a season in which to be needlessly scrupulous. He resolved to judge for himself. Accordingly, he was introduced to the two military aspirants at the Cross Shovels in the Mint, by our old acquaintance, Baptist Kettleby. The Master of the Mint, with whom the Jacobite captain had often had transactions before, vouched for their being men of honor and loyalty; and Kneebone was so well satisfied with his representations, that he at once closed the matter by administering to the applicants the oath of allegiance and fidelity to King James the Third, and several other oaths besides, all of which those gentlemen took with as little hesitation as the sum of money, afterwards tendered, to make the compact binding. The party, then, sat down to a bowl of punch; and, at its conclusion, Captain Kneebone regretted that an engagement to spend the evening with Mrs. Wood, would preclude the possibility of his remaining with his new friends as long as his inclinations prompted. At this piece of information, the two subordinate officers were observed to exchange glances; and, after a little agreeable raillery on their captain's gallantry, they begged permission to accompany him in his visit. Kneebone, who had drained his glass to the restoration of the house of Stuart, and the downfall of the house of Hanover, more frequently than was consistent with prudence, consented; and the trio set out for Wych Street, where they arrived in the jolliest humor possible.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. KNEEBONE AND HIS FRIENDS.

Mrs. Wood was scarcely seated before Mr. Kneebone made his appearance. To her great surprise and mortification he was not alone; but brought with him a couple of friends, whom he begged to introduce as Mr. Jeremiah Jackson, and Mr. Solomon Smith, chapmen (or what in modern vulgar parlance would be termed bagmen), traveling to procure orders for the house of an eminent cloth manufacturer in Manchester. Neither the manners, the looks, nor the attire of these gentlemen, prepossessed Mrs. Wood in their favor. Accordingly, on their presentation, Mr. Jeremiah Jackson and Mr. Solomon Smith received something very like a rebuff. Luckily, they were not easily discomposed. Two persons possessing a more comfortable stock of assurance could not be readily found. Imitating the example of Mr. Kneebone, who did not appear in the slightest degree disconcerted by his cool reception, each sank carelessly into a chair, and made himself at home in a moment. Both had very singular faces; very odd wigs, very much pulled over their brows; and very large cravats, very much raised above their chins. Besides this, each had a large black patch over his right eye, and a very queer twist at the left side of his mouth, so that, if their object had been disguise, they could not have adopted better precautions. Mrs. Wood thought them both remarkably plain, but Mr. Smith decidedly the plainest of the two. His complexion was as blue as a sailor's jacket, and though Mr. Jackson had one of the ugliest countenances imaginable, he had a very fine set of

teeth. That was something in his favor. One peculiarity she did not fail to notice. They were both dressed in every respect alike. In fact, Mr. Solomon Smith seemed to be Mr. Jeremiah Jackson's double. He talked in the same style, and pretty nearly in the same language; laughed in the same manner, and coughed or sneezed at the same time. If Mr. Jackson took an accurate survey of the room with his one eye, Mr. Smith's solitary orb followed in the same direction. When Jeremiah admired the Compasses in the arms of the Carpenter's Company over the chimneypiece, or the portraits of the two eminent masters of the rule and plane, William Portington, and John Scott, Esquires, on either side of it, Solomon was lost in wonder. When Mr. Jackson noticed a fine service of old blue china in an open japan closet, Mr. Smith had never seen anything like it. And finally, when Jeremiah, having bestowed upon Mrs. Wood a very free-and-easy, sort of a stare, winked at Mr. Kneebone, his impertinence was copied to the letter by Solomon. All three, then, burst into an immoderate fit of laughter. Mrs. Wood's astonishment and displeasure momentarily increased. Such freedoms from such people were not to be endured. Her patience was waning fast. Still, in spite of her glances and gestures, Mr. Kneebone made no effort to check the unreasonable merriment of his companions, but rather seemed to encourage it. So Mrs. Wood went on fuming, and the trio went on laughing for some minutes, nobody knew why or wherefore, until the party was increased by Mr. Wood, in his Sunday habiliments and Sunday buckle. Without stopping to inquire into the cause of their mirth, or even to ask the names of his guests, the worthy carpenter shook hands with the one-eyed chapmen, slapped Mr. Kneebone cordially on the shoulder, and began to laugh as heartily as any of them.

Mrs. Wood could stand it no longer.

"I think you're all bewitched," she cried.

"So we are, ma'am, by your charms," returned Mr. Jackson, gallantly.

"Quite captivated, ma'am," added Mr. Smith, placing his hand on his breast.

Mr. Kneebone and Mr. Wood laughed louder than ever.

"Mr. Wood," said the lady, bridling up, "my request may, perhaps, have some weight with *you*. I desire, sir, you'll recollect yourself. Mr. Kneebone," she added, with a glance at that gentleman, which was meant to speak daggers, "will do as he pleases."

Here the chapmen set up another boisterous peal.

"No offense, I hope, my dear Mrs. W.," said Mr. Kneebone in a conciliatory tone. "My friends, Mr. Jackson and Mr. Smith, may have rather odd ways with them; but——"

"They *have* very odd ways," interrupted Mrs. Wood, disdainfully.

"Our worthy friend was going to observe, ma'am, that we never fail in our devotion to the fair sex," said Mr. Jackson.

"Never, ma'am!" echoed Mr. Smith, "upon my conscience."

"My dear," said the hospitable carpenter, "I dare say Mr. Kneebone and his friends would be glad of a little refreshment."

"They shall have it, then," replied his better half, rising. "You base ingrate," she added, in a whisper, as she flounced past Mr. Kneebone on her way to the door, "how could you bring such creatures with you, especially on an occasion like this, when we haven't met for a fortnight!"

"Couldn't help it, my life," returned the gentleman addressed, in the same tone; but you little know who those individuals are."

"Lord bless us! you alarm me. Who are they?"

Mr. Kneebone assumed a mysterious air, and, bringing his lips close to Mrs. Wood's ear, whispered, "Secret agents from France—you understand—friends to the good cause—hem!"

"I see—persons of rank?"

Mr. Kneebone nodded.

"Noblemen?"

Mr. Kneebone smiled assent.

"Mercy on us! Well, I thought their manners quite out of the common. And so, the invasion really is to take place after all; and the Chevalier de Saint George is to land at the Tower with fifty thousand Frenchmen; and the Hanoverian usurper's to be beheaded; and Doctor Sacheverel's to be made a bishop, and we're all to be —eh?"

"All in good time," returned Kneebone, putting his finger to his lips; "don't let your imagination run away with you, my charmer. That boy," he added, looking at Thames, "has his eye upon us."

Mrs. Wood, however, was too much excited to attend to the caution.

"O lud!" she cried; "French noblemen in disguise! and so rude as I was! I shall never recover it!"

"A good supper will set all to rights," insinuated Kneebone. "But be prudent, my angel."

"Never fear," replied the lady. "I'm prudence personified. You might trust me with the Chevalier himself—I'd never betray him. But why didn't you let me know they were coming? I'd have got something nice. As it is, we've only a couple of ducks, and they were intended for you. Winny, my love, come with me. I shall want you. Sorry to quit your lord—worships, I mean—I don't know what I mean," she added, a little confused, and dropping a profound curtsy to the disguised noblemen,

each of whom replied by a bow, worthy, in her opinion, of a prince of the blood at the least—"but I've a few necessary orders to give below."

"Don't mind us, ma'am," said Mr. Jackson; "ha! ha!"

"Not in the least, ma'am," echoed Mr. Smith; ho! ho!"

"How condescending!" thought Mrs. Wood. "Not proud in the least, I declare. Well, I'd no idea," she continued, pursuing her ruminations as she left the room, "that people of quality laughed so. But it's French manners, I suppose."

CHAPTER V.

HAWK AND BUZZARD.

Mrs. Wood's anxiety to please her distinguished guests speedily diplayed itself in a very plentiful, if not very dainty, repast. To the ducklings, peas, and other delicacies, intended for Mr. Kneebone's special consumption, she added a few impromptu dishes, tossed off in her best style, such as lamb chops, broiled kidneys, fried ham and eggs, and toasted cheese. Side by side with the cheese (its never-failing accompaniment, in all seasons, at the carpenter's board) came a tankard of swig, and a toast. Besides these there was a warm gooseberry tart, and a cold pigeon-pie—the latter capacious enough, even allowing for its due complement of steak, to contain the whole produce of a dovecote, a couple of lobsters, and the best part of a salmon swimming in a sea of vinegar, and shaded by a forest of fennel. While the cloth was laid, the host and Thames descended to the cellar, whence they returned, laden with a number of flasks of the same form, and apparently destined to the same use as those depicted in Hogarth's delectable print—the Modern Midnight Conversation.

Mrs. Wood now reappeared with a very red face; and, followed by Winifred, took her seat at the table. Operations then commenced. Mr. Wood carved the ducks; Mr. Kneebone helped to the pigeon-pie; while Thames unwired and uncorked a bottle of stout Carnarvonshire ale. The woolen-draper was no despicable trencherman in a general way; but his feats with the knife and fork were child's sport compared with those of Mr. Smith.

The leg and wing of a duck were disposed of by this gentleman in a twinkling; a brace of pigeons and a pound of steak followed with equal celerity; and he had just begun to make a fierce assault upon the eggs and ham. His appetite was perfectly Gargantuan. Nor must it be imagined, that while he thus exercised his teeth, he neglected the flagon. On the contrary, his glass was never idle, and finding it not filled quite so frequently as he desired, he applied himself, notwithstanding the expressive looks and muttered remonstrances of Mr. Jackson, to the swig. The latter gentleman did full justice to the good things before him; but he drank sparingly, and was visibly annoyed by his companion's intemperance. As to Mr. Kneebone, what with flirting with Mrs. Wood, carving for his friends, and pledging the carpenter, he had his hands full. At this juncture, and just as a cuckoo-clock in the corner struck six, Jack Sheppard walked into the room, with the packing-case under his arm.

"I was in the right, you see, father," observed Thames, smiling; "Jack *has* done his task."

"So I perceive," replied Wood.

"Where am I to take it to?" asked Sheppard.

"I told you that before," rejoined Wood, testily. "You must take it to Sir Rowland Trenchard's, in Southampton Fields. And, mind, it's for his sister, Lady Trafford."

"Very well, sir," replied Sheppard.

"Wet your whistle before you start, Jack," said Kneebone, pouring out a glass of ale. "What's that you're taking to Sir Rowland Trenchard's?"

"Only a box, sir," answered Sheppard, emptying the glass.

"It's an odd-shaped one," rejoined Kneebone, examining it attentively. "But I can guess what it's for. Sir Rowland is one of *us*," he added, winking at his compan-

ions, "and so was his brother-in-law, Sir Cecil Trafford. Old Lancashire families both. Strict Catholics, and loyal to the backbone. Fine woman, Lady Trafford—a little on the wane though."

"Ah! you're so very particular," sighed Mrs. Wood.

"Not in the least," returned Kneebone, slily; "not in the least. Another glass, Jack."

"Thank'ee, sir," grinned Sheppard.

"Off with it to the health of King James the Third, and confusion to his enemies?"

"Hold!" interposed Wood; "that is treason. I'll have no such toast drunk at my table!"

"It's the king's birthday," urged the woolen-draper.

"Not *my* king's," returned Wood. "I quarrel with no man's political opinions, but I will have my own respected!"

"Eh day!" exclaimed Mrs. Wood; "here's a pretty-to-do about nothing. Marry, come up! I'll see who's to be obeyed. Drink the toast, Jack."

"At your peril, sirrah!" cried Wood.

"He was hanged that left his drink behind, you know, master," rejoined Sheppard. "Here's King James the Third, and confusion to his enemies!"

"Very well," said the carpenter, sitting down amid the laughter of the company.

"Jack!" cried Thames, in a loud voice, "you deserve to be hanged for a rebel as you are to your lawful king and your lawful master. But since we must have toasts," he added, snatching up a glass, "listen to mine: Here's King George the First! a long reign to him! and confusion to the Popish Pretender and his adherents!"!

"Bravely done!" said Wood, with tears in his eyes.

"That's the kinchin as was to try the dub for us, ain't it!" muttered Smith to his companion as he stole a glance at Jack Sheppard.

"Silence!" returned Jackson, in a deep whisper; "and don't muddle your brains with any more of that Pharaoh. You'll need all your strength to grab him."

"What's the matter?" remarked Kneebone, addressing Sheppard who, as he caught the single but piercing eye of Jackson fixed upon him, started and trembled.

"What's the matter?" repeated Mrs. Wood, in a sharp tone.

"Ay, what's the matter, boy?" reiterated Jackson, sternly. "Did you never see two gentlemen with only a couple of peepers between them before?"

"Never, I'll be sworn!" said Smith, taking the opportunity of filling his glass while his comrade's back was turned; "we're a nat'ral cur'osity."

"Can I have a word with you, master?" said Sheppard, approaching Wood.

"Not a syllable!" answered the carpenter, angrily. "Get about your business!"

"Thames!" cried Jack, beckoning to his friend.

But Darrell averted his head.

"Mistress!" said the apprentice, making a final appeal to Mrs. Wood.

"Leave the room instantly, sirrah!" rejoined the lady, bouncing up, and giving him a slap on the cheek that made his eyes flash fire.

"May I be cursed," muttered Sheppard, as he slunk away with (as the woolen-draper pleasantly observed) 'a couple of boxes in charge,' "if ever I try to be honest again!"

"Take a little toasted cheese with the swig, Mr. Smith," observed Wood. "That's an incorrigible rascal," he added, as Sheppard closed the door; "it's only to-day that I discovered——"

"What?" asked Jackson, pricking up his ears.

"Don't speak ill of him behind his back, father," interposed Thames.

"MAY I BE CURSED," MUTTERED JACK SHEPPARD, "IF EVER I TRY TO BE HONEST AGAIN"

"If *I* were your father, young gentleman," returned Jackson, enraged at the interruption, "I'd teach *you* not to speak till you were spoken to."

Thames was about to reply, but a glance from Wood checked him.

"The rebuke is just," said the carpenter; "at the same time, I'm not sorry to find you're a friend to fair play, which, as you seem to know, is a jewel. Open that bottle with a blue seal, my dear. Gentlemen! a glass of brandy will be no bad finish to our meal."

This proposal giving general satisfaction, the bottle circulated swiftly; and Smith found the liquor so much to his taste, that he made it pay double toll on its passage.

"Your son is a lad of spirit, Mr. Wood," observed Jackson, in a slightly-sarcastic tone.

"He's not my son," rejoined the carpenter.

"How, sir?"

"Except by adoption. Thames Darrell is——"

"My husband nicknames him Thames," interrupted Mrs. Wood, "because he found him in the river! ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha!" echoed Smith, taking another bumper of brandy; "he'll set the Thames on fire one of these days, I'll warrant him!"

"That's more than you'll ever do, you drunken fool!" growled Jackson, in an undertone; be cautious, or you'll spoil all!"

"Suppose we send for a bowl of punch," said Kneebone.

"With all my heart!" replied Wood. And, turning to his daughter, he gave the necessary directions in a low tone.

Winifred, accordingly, left the room, and a servant being dispatched to the nearest tavern, soon after returned

with a crown bowl of the ambrosian fluid. The tables were then cleared. Bottles and glasses usurped the place of dishes and plates. Pipes were lighted; and Mr. Kneebone began to dispense the fragrant fluid; begging Mrs. Wood, in a whisper, as he filled a rummer to the brim, not to forget the health of the Chevalier de Saint George —a proposition to which the lady immediately responded by drinking the toast aloud.

"The Chevalier shall hear of this," whispered the woolen-draper.

"You don't say so!" replied Mrs. Wood, delighted at the idea.

Mr. Kneebone assured her that he *did* say so; and, as a further proof of his sincerity, squeezed her hand very warmly under the table.

Mr. Smith, now, being more than half-seas over, became very uproarious, and, claiming the attention of the table, volunteered the following

DRINKING SONG.

I.

Jolly nose! the bright rubies that garnish thy tip
Are dug from the mines of canary;
And to keep up their luster I moisten my lip
With hogsheads of claret and sherry.

II.

Jolly nose! he who sees thee across a broad glass
Beholds thee in all thy perfection;
And to the pale snout of a temperate ass
Entertains the profoundest objection.

III.

For a big-bellied glass is the palette I use,
And the choicest of wine is my color;
And I find that my nose takes the mellowest hues
The fuller I fill it—the fuller!

IV.

Jolly nose! there are fools who say drink hurts the sight;
Such dullards know nothing about it.
'Tis better with wine to extinguish the light,
Than live always in darkness without it!

"How long may it be since that boy was found in the way Mrs. Wood mentions?" inquired Jackson, as soon as the clatter that succeeded Mr. Smith's melody had subsided.

"Let me see," replied Wood; "exactly twelve years ago last November."

"Why, that must be about the time of the Great Storm," rejoined Jackson.

"Egad!" exclaimed Wood, "you've hit the right nail on the head, anyhow. It *was* on the night of the Great Storm that I found him."

"I should like to hear all particulars of the affair," said Jackson, "if it wouldn't be troubling you too much."

Mr. Wood required little pressing. He took a sip of punch and commenced his relation. Though meant to produce a totally different effect, the narrative seemed to excite the risible propensities rather than the commiseration of his auditor; and when Mr. Wood wound it up by a description of the drenching he had undergone at the Mint Pump, the other could hold out no longer, but, leaning back in his chair, gave free scope to his merriment.

"I beg your pardon," he cried; "but really—ha! ha! —you must excuse me!—that is so uncommonly diverting—ha! ha! Do let me hear it again?—ha! ha! ha!"

"Upon my word," rejoined Wood, "you seem vastly entertained by my misfortune."

"To be sure! Nothing entertains me so much. People always rejoice at the misfortunes of others—never at their

own! The droll dogs! how *they* must have enjoyed it! —ha! ha!"

"I dare say they did. But *I* found it no laughing matter, I can assure you. And, though it's a long time ago, I feel as sore on the subject as ever."

"Quite natural! Never forgive an injury! *I* never do!—ha! ha!"

"Really, Mr. Jackson, I could almost fancy we had met before. Your laugh reminds me of—of——"

"Whose, sir?" demanded Jackson, becoming suddenly grave.

"You'll not be offended, I hope," returned Wood, drily, "if I say that your, voice, your manner, and, above all, your very extraordinary way of laughing, put me strangely in mind of one of the 'droll dogs' (as you term them) who helped to perpetrate the outrage I've just described."

"Whom do you mean?" demanded Jackson.

"I allude to an individual who has since acquired an infamous notoriety as a thief-taker; but who, in those days, was himself the associate of thieves."

"Well, sir, his name?"

"Jonathan Wild."

"'Sblood!" cried Jackson, rising, "I can't sit still and hear Mr. Wild, whom I believe to be as honest a gentleman as any in the kingdom, calumniated!"

"Fire and fury!" exclaimed Smith, getting up with the brandy bottle in his grasp; "no man shall abuse Mr. Wild in my presence! He's the right-hand of the community! We could do nothing without him!"

"*We!*" repeated Wood, significantly.

"Every honest man, sir! He helps us to our own again."

"Humph!" ejaculated the carpenter.

"Surely," observed Thames, laughing, "to one who entertains so high an opinion of Jonathan Wild as Mr.

Jackson appears to do, it can't be very offensive to be told that he's like him."

"I don't object to the likeness, if any such exists, young sir," returned Jackson, darting an angry glance at Thames; "indeed I'm rather flattered by being thought to resemble a gentleman of Mr. Wild's figure. But I can't submit to hear the well-earned reputation of my friend termed an 'infamous notoriety.'"

"No, we can't stand that," hiccuped Smith, scarcely able to keep his legs.

"Well, gentlemen," rejoined Wood, mildly; "since Mr. Wild is a friend of yours, I'm sorry for what I said. I've no doubt he's as honest as either of you."

"Enough," returned Jackson, extending his hand; "and if I've expressed myself warmly, I'm sorry for it likewise. But you must allow me to observe, my good sir, that you're wholly in the wrong respecting my friend. Mr. Wild never was the associate of thieves."

"Never," echoed Smith, emphatically, "upon my honor."

"I'm satisfied with your assurance," replied the carpenter drily.

"It's more than I am," muttered Thames.

"I was not aware that Jonathan Wild was an acquaintance of yours, Mr. Jackson," said Kneebone, whose assiduity to Mrs. Wood had prevented him from paying much attention to the previous scene.

"I've known him all my life," replied the other.

"The devil you have! Then, perhaps, you can tell me when he intends to put his threat into execution?"

"What threat?" asked Jackson.

"Why, of hanging the fellow who acts as his jackal; one Blake, or Blueskin, I think he's called."

"You've been misinformed, sir," interposed Smith. "Mr. Wild is incapable of such baseness."

"Bah!" returned the woolen-draper. "I see you don't know him as well as you pretend. Jonathan is capable of anything. He has hanged twelve of his associates already. The moment they cease to be serviceable, or become dangerous, he lodges an information, and the matter is settled. He has always plenty of evidence in reserve. Blueskin is booked. As sure as you're sitting there, Mr. Smith, he'll swing after next Old Bailey sessions. I wouldn't be in his skin for a trifle!"

"But he may peach," said Smith, casting an oblique glance at Jackson.

"It would avail him little if he did," replied Kneebone. "Jonathan does what he pleases in the courts."

"Very true," chuckled Jackson; "very true."

"Blueskin's only chance would be to carry *his* threat into effect," pursued the woolen-draper.

"Aha!" exclaimed Jackson. "*He* threatens, does he?"

"More than that," replied Kneebone; "I understand he drew a knife upon Jonathan, in a quarrel between them lately. And, since then, he has openly avowed his determination of cutting his master's throat on the slightest inkling of treachery. But, perhaps Mr. Smith will tell you I'm misinformed also on that point."

"On the contrary," rejoined Smith, looking askance at his companion, "I happen to *know* you're in the right."

"Well, sir, I'm obliged to you," said Jackson; "I shall take care to put Mr. Wild on his guard against an assassin."

"And I shall put Blueskin on the alert against the designs of a traitor," rejoined Smith, in a tone that sounded like a menace.

"In my opinion," remarked Kneebone, "it doesn't matter how soon society is rid of two such scoundrels: and if Blueskin dies by the rope, and Jonathan by the hand of violence, they'll meet the fate they merit. Wild

was formerly an agent to the Jacobite party, but, on the offer of a bribe from the opposite faction, he unhesitatingly deserted and betrayed his old employers. Of late, he has become the instrument of Walpole, and does all the dirty work for the Secret Committee. Several arrests of importance have been intrusted to him; but, forewarned, forearmed, we have constantly baffled his schemes; —ha! ha! Jonathan's a devilish clever fellow. But he can't have his eyes always about him, or he'd have been with us this morning at the Mint, eh, Mr. Jackson!"

"So he would," replied the latter; "so he would."

"With all his cunning, he may meet with his match," continued Kneebone, laughing, "I've set a trap for him."

"Take care you don't fall into it yourself," returned Jackson, with a slight sneer.

"Were I in your place," said Smith, "I should be apprehensive of Wild, because he's a declared enemy."

"And were I in *yours*," rejoined the woolen-draper, "I should be doubly apprehensive, because he's a professed friend. But we're neglecting the punch all this time. A bumper round, gentlemen. Success to our enterprise!"

"Success to our enterprise!" echoed the others, significantly.

"May I ask whether you made any further inquiries into the mysterious affair about which we were speaking just now?" observed Jackson, turning to the carpenter.

"I can't say I did," replied Wood, somewhat reluctantly; "what with the confusion incident to the storm, and the subsequent press of business, I put it off till it was too late. I've often regretted that I didn't investigate the matter. However, it doesn't much signify. All concerned in the dark transaction must have perished."

"Are you sure of that?" inquired Jackson.

"As sure as one reasonably can be. I saw their boat

swept away, and heard the roar of the fall beneath the bridge; and no one, who was present, could doubt the result. If the principal instigator of the crime, whom I afterwards encountered on the platform, and who was dashed into the raging flood by the shower of bricks, escaped, his preservation must have been indeed miraculous."

"Your own was equally so," said Jackson, ironically. "What if he did escape?"

"My utmost efforts should be used to bring him to justice."

"Hum!"

"Have you any reason to suppose he survived the accident?" inquired Thames, eagerly.

Jackson smiled, and put on the air of a man who knows more than he cares to tell.

"I merely asked the question," he said, after he had enjoyed the boy's suspense for a moment.

The hope that had been suddenly kindled in the youth's bosom was as suddenly extinguished.

"If I thought he lived——" observed Wood.

"*If!*" interrupted Jackson, changing his tone: "he *does* live. And it has been well for you that he imagines the child was drowned."

"Who is he?" asked Thames impatiently.

"You're inquisitive, young gentleman," replied Jackson, coldly. "When you're older, you'll know that secrets of importance are not disclosed gratuitously. Your adoptive father understands mankind better."

"I'd give half I'm worth to hang the villain, and restore this boy to his rights," said Mr. Wood.

"How do you know he *has* any rights to be restored to?" returned Jackson, with a grin.

"Judging from what you tell me, I've no doubt he's the illegitimate offspring of some handsome, but low-

born profligate ; in which case he'll neither have name nor wealth for his inheritance. The assassination, as you call it, was obviously the vengeance of a kinsman of the injured lady, who no doubt was of good family, upon her seducer. The less said, therefore, on this point the better ; because as nothing is to be gained by it, it would only be trouble thrown away. But, if you have any particular fancy for hanging the gentleman, who chose to take the law into his own hands—and I think your motive extremely disinterested and praiseworthy—why it's just possible, if you make it worth my while, that your desires may be gratified."

"I don't see how this is to be effected, unless you yourself were present at the time," said Wood, glancing suspiciously at the speaker.

"I had no hand in the affair," replied Jackson, bluntly ; "but I know those who had ; and could bring forward evidence, if you require it."

"The best evidence would be afforded by an accomplice of the assassin," rejoined Thames, who was greatly offended by the insinuation as to his parentage.

"Perhaps you could point out such a party, Mr. Jackson?" said Wood, significantly.

"I could," replied Thames.

"Then you need no further information from me," rejoined Jackson sternly.

"Stay!" cried Wood, "this is a most perplexing business—if you really are privy to the affair——"

"We'll talk of it to-morrow, sir," returned Jackson cutting him short. "In the meantime, with your permission, I'll just make a few minutes of our conversation."

"As many as you please," replied Wood, walking towards the chimneypiece, and taking down a constable's staff, which hung upon a nail.

Jackson, meantime, produced a pocket-book ; and, after

deliberately sharpening the point of a pencil, began to write on a blank leaf. While he was thus occupied, Thames, prompted by an unaccountable feeling of curiosity, took up the penknife which the other had just used, and examined the haft. What he there noticed occasioned a marked change in his demeanor. He laid down the knife, and fixed a searching and distrustful gaze upon the writer, who continued his task, unconscious of anything having happened

"There," cried Jackson, closing the book and rising, "that'll do. To-morrow at twelve I'll be with you, Mr. Wood. Make up your mind as to the terms, and I'll engage to find the man."

"Hold!" exclaimed the carpenter, in an authoritative voice: "we can't part thus. Thames, lock the door." (An order which was promptly obeyed.) "Now, sir, I must insist upon a full explanation of your mysterious hints, or, as I am headborough of the district—I shall at once take you into custody."

Jackson treated this menace with a loud laugh of derision.

"What ho!" he cried, slapping Smith, who had fallen asleep with the brandy-bottle in his grasp, upon the shoulder. "It is time!"

"For what?" grumbled the latter, rubbing his eyes.

"For the caption!" replied Jackson, coolly drawing a brace of pistols from his pockets.

"Ready!" answered Smith, shaking himself, and producing a similar pair of weapons.

"In Heaven's name! what's all this?" cried Wood.

"Be still, and you'll receive no injury," returned Jackson. "We're merely about to discharge our duty by apprehending a rebel. Captain Kneebone! we must trouble you to accompany us."

"I've no intention of stirring," replied the woolen-

draper, who was thus unceremoniously disturbed: "and I beg you'll sit down, Mr. Jackson."

"Come, sir!" thundered the latter; "no trifling! Perhaps," he added, opening a warrant, "you'll obey this mandate?"

"A warrant!" ejaculated Kneebone, starting to his feet.

"Ay, sir, from the Secretary of State, for *your* arrest! You're charged with high-treason."

"By those who've conspired with me?"

"No! by those who've entrapped you! You've long eluded our vigilance; but we've caught you at last!"

"Damnation!" exclaimed the woolen-draper; "that I should be the dupe of such a miserable artifice!"

"It's no use lamenting now, Captain! You ought rather to be obliged to us for allowing you to pay this visit. We could have secured you when you left the Mint. But we wished to ascertain whether Mrs. Wood's charms equaled your description."

"Wretches!" screamed the lady; "don't dare to breathe your vile insinuations against me! Oh! Mr. Kneebone, are these your French noblemen?"

"Don't upbraid me!" rejoined the woolen-draper.

"Bring him along, Joe!" said Jackson, in a whisper, to his comrade.

Smith obeyed. But he had scarcely advanced a step, when he was felled to the ground by a blow from the powerful arm of Kneebone, who, instantly possessing himself of a pistol, leveled it at Jackson's head.

"Begone! or I fire!" he cried.

"Mr. Wood," returned Jackson, with the utmost composure; "you're a headborough, and a loyal subject of King George. I call upon you to assist me in the apprehension of this person. You'll be answerable for his escape."

"Mr. Wood, I command you not to stir," vociferated

the carpenter's better half; "recollect you'll be answerable to me."

"I declare I don't know what to do," said Wood, torn by conflicting emotions. "Mr. Kneebone! you would greatly oblige me by surrendering yourself."

"Never!" replied the woolen-draper; "and if that treacherous rascal, by your side, doesn't make himself scarce quickly, I'll send a bullet through his brain."

"My death will lie at your door," remarked Jackson to the carpenter.

"Show me your warrant!" said Wood, almost driven to his wits'-end; "perhaps it isn't regular?"

"Ask him who he is?" suggested Thames.

"A good idea!" exclaimed the carpenter. "May I beg to know whom I've the pleasure of addressing? Jackson, I conclude, is merely an assumed name."

"What does it signify?" returned the latter, angrily.

"A great deal!" replied Thames. "If you won't disclose your name, I will for you! You are Jonathan Wild!"

"Further concealment is needless," answered the other, pulling off his wig and black patch, and resuming his natural tone of voice; "I *am* Jonathan Wild?"

"Say you so!" rejoined Kneebone; "then be this your passport to eternity."

Upon which he drew the trigger of the pistol, which, luckily for the individual against whom it was aimed, flashed in the pan.

"I might now send you on a similar journey!" replied Jonathan, with a bitter smile, and preserving the unmoved demeanor he had maintained throughout; "but I prefer conveying you, in the first instance, to Newgate. The Jacobite daws want a scare-crow."

So saying, he sprang with a bound, like that of a tiger-cat, against the throat of the woolen-draper. And so

sudden and well directed was the assault, that he completely overthrew his gigantic antagonist.

"Lend a hand with the ruffles, Blueskin!" he shouted, as that personage, who had just recovered from the stunning effects of the blow, contrived to pick himself up. "Look quick, d—n you or we shall never master him!"

"Murder!" shrieked Mrs. Wood, at the top of her voice.

"Here's a pistol!" cried Thames, darting towards the undischarged weapon dropped by Blueskin in the scuffle, and pointing it at Jonathan. "Shall I shoot him!"

"Yes! yes! put it to his ear!" cried Mrs. Wood; "that's the surest way!"

"No! no! give it me!" vociferated Wood, snatching the pistol, and rushing to the door; against which he placed his back.

"I'll soon settle this business. Jonathan Wild!" he added, in a loud voice, "I command you to release your prisoner."

"So I will," replied Jonathan, who, with Blueskin's aid, had succeeded in slipping a pair of handcuffs over the woolen-draper's wrists, "when I've Mr. Walpole's order to that effect—but not before."

"You'll take the consequences then?"

"Willingly."

"In that case I arrest you, and your confederate, Joseph Blake, alias Blueskin, on a charge of felony," returned Wood, brandishing his staff; "resist my authority, if you dare."

"A clever device," replied Jonathan; "but it won't serve your turn. Let us pass, sir. Strike the gag, Blueskin."

"You shall not stir a footstep. Open the window, Thames, and call for assistance."

"Stop!" cried Jonathan, who did not care to push matters too far; "let me have a word with you, Mr. Wood."

"I'll have no explanations whatever," replied the carpenter, disdainfully, "except before a magistrate."

"At least state your charge. It is a serious accusation."

"It *is*," answered Wood. "Do you recollect this key? Do you recollect to whom you gave it, and for what purpose? or shall I refresh your memory?"

Wild appeared confounded.

"Release your prisoner," continued Wood, "or the window is opened."

"Mr. Wood," said Jonathan, advancing towards him, and speaking in a low tone, "the secret of your adopted son's birth is known to me. The name of his father's murderer is also known to me. I can help you to both—nay, I *will* help you to both, if you do not interfere with my plans. The arrest of this person is of consequence to me. Do not oppose it, and I will serve you. Thwart me, and I become your mortal enemy. I have but to give a hint of that boy's existence in the proper quarter, and his life will not be worth a day's purchase."

"Don't listen to him, father," cried Thames, unconscious of what was passing; "there are plenty of people outside."

"Make your choice," said Jonathan.

"If you don't decide quickly, I'll scream," cried Mrs. Wood, popping her head through the window.

"Set your prisoner free!" returned Wood.

"Take off the ruffles, Blueskin," rejoined Wild. "You know my fixed determination," he added, in a low tone, as he passed the carpenter. "Before to-morrow night that boy shall join his father."

So saying, he unlocked the door, and strode out of the room.

"Here are some letters, which will let you see what a snake you've cherished in your bosom, you uxorious old

dotard," said Blueskin, tossing a packet of papers to Wood, as he followed his leader.

"'Odd's-my-life? what's this?" exclaimed the carpenter, looking at the superscription of one of them. "Why, this is your writing, Dolly, and addressed to Mr. Kneebone."

"My writing! no such thing!" ejaculated the lady, casting a look of alarm at the woolen-draper.

"Confusion!" the rascal must have picked my pocket of your letters," whispered Kneebone. "What's to be done?"

"What's to be done! Why, I'm undone! How imprudent in you not to burn them. But men *are* so careless, there's no trusting anything to them! However, I must try to brazen it out—Give me the letters, my love," she added aloud, and in her most winning accents; "they're some wicked forgeries."

"Excuse me, madam," replied the carpenter, turning his back upon her, and sinking into a chair: "Thames, my love, bring me my spectacles. My heart misgives me. Fool that I was to marry for beauty! I ought to have remembered that a fair woman and a slashed gown always finds some nail in the way."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS THE LADDER.

If there is one thing on earth more lovely than another, it is a fair girl of the tender age of Winifred Wood! Her beauty awakens no feeling beyond that of admiration. The charm of innocence breathes around her, as fragrance is diffused by the flower, sanctifying her lightest thought and action, and shielding her, like a spell, from the approach of evil. Beautiful is the girl of twelve—who is neither child nor woman, but something between both, something more exquisite than either!

Such was the fairy creature presented to Thames Darrell, under the following circumstances.

Glad to escape from the scene of recrimination that ensued between his adopted parents, Thames seized the earliest opportunity of retiring, and took his way to a small chamber in the upper part of the house, where he and Jack were accustomed to spend most of their leisure in the amusements, or pursuits, proper to their years. He found the door ajar, and, to his surprise, perceived little Winifred seated at a table, busily engaged in tracing some design upon a sheet of paper. She did not hear his approach, but continued her occupation without raising her head.

It was a charming sight to watch the motions of her tiny fingers as she pursued her task; and though the posture she adopted was not the most favorable that might have been chosen for the display of her sylphlike figure, there was something in her attitude, and the glow of her countenance, lighted up by the mellow radiance of

the setting sun falling upon her through the panes of the little dormer window, that seemed to the youth inexpressibly beautiful. Winifred's features would have been pretty, for they were regular and delicately formed, if they had not been slightly marked by the smallpox; —a disorder that sometimes spares more than it destroys, and imparts an expression to be sought for in vain in the smoothest complexion. We have seen pitted cheeks, which we would not exchange for dimples and a satin skin. Winifred's face had a thoroughly amiable look. Her mouth was worthy of her face; with small, pearly-white teeth; lips glossy, rosy, and pouting; and the sweetest smile imaginable playing constantly about them. Her eyes were soft and blue, arched over by dark brows, and fringed by long silken lashes. Her hair was of the darkest brown, and finest texture; and, when unloosed, hung down to her heels. She was dressed in a little white frock, with a very long body, and very short sleeves, which looked (from a certain fulness about the hips) as if it was intended to be worn with a hoop. Her slender throat was encircled by a black ribbon, with a small locket attached to it; and upon the top of her head rested a diminutive lace cap.

The room in which she sat was a portion of the garret, assigned, as we have just stated, by Mr. Wood as a play-room to the two boys; and, like most boys' playrooms, it exhibited a total absence of order or neatness. Things were thrown here and there, to be taken up, or again cast aside, as the whim arose; while the broken-backed chairs and crazy table bore the marks of many a conflict. The characters of the youthful occupants of the room might be detected in every article it contained. Darrell's peculiar bent of mind was exemplified in a rusty broadsword, a tall grenadier's cap, a musket without lock or ramrod, a belt and cartouch-box, with other matters, evincing a

decided military taste. Among his books, Plutarch's Lives, and the Histories of Great Commanders, appeared to have been frequently consulted, but the dust had gathered thickly upon the Carpenter's Manual, and a Treatise on Trigonometry and Geometry. Beneath the shelf, containing these books, hung the fine old ballad of "*St. George for England*," and a loyal ditty, then much in vogue, called "*True Protestant Gratitude, or Britain's Thanksgiving for the First of August, being the Day of His Majesty's Happy Accession to the Throne.*" Jack Sheppard's library consisted of a few ragged and well-thumbed volumes, abstracted from the tremendous chronicles bequeathed to the world by those Froissarts and Holinsheds of crime— the Ordinaries of Newgate. His vocal collection comprised a couple of flash songs pasted against the wall, entitled "*The Thief Catcher's Prophecy*," and the "*Life and Death of the Darkman's Budge;*" while his extraordinary mechanical skill was displayed in what he termed (Jack had a supreme contempt for orthography) a "*Moddle of his Ma^s. Jale off Newgate;*" another model of the pillory at Fleet Bridge; and a third of the permanent gibbet at Tyburn. The latter specimen of his workmanship was adorned with a little scare-crow figure, intended to represent a housebreaking chimney-sweeper of the time, described in Sheppard's own handwriting, as "*Jack Hall a-hanging.*" We must not omit to mention that a family group from the pencil of little Winifred, representing Mr. and Mrs. Wood in very characteristic attitudes, occupied a prominent place on the walls.

For a few moments, Thames regarded the little girl through the half-opened door in silence. On a sudden a change came over her countenance, which, up to this moment, had worn a smiling and satisfied expression. Throwing down the pencil, she snatched up a piece of

India-rubber, and exclaiming—"It isn't at all like him! it isn't half handsome enough!" was about to efface the sketch, when Thames darted into the room.

"Who isn't it like?" he asked, endeavoring to gain possession of the drawing, which, at the sound of his footstep, she crushed between her fingers.

"I can't tell you!" she replied, blushing deeply, and clinching her little hand as tightly as possible; "it's a secret!"

"I'll soon find it out, then," he returned, playfully forcing the paper from her grasp.

"Don't look at it, I entreat," she cried.

But her request was unheeded. Thames unfolded the drawing, smoothed out its creases, and beheld a portrait of himself.

"I've a good mind not to speak to you again, sir!" cried Winifred, with difficulty repressing a tear of vexation; "you've acted unfairly."

"I feel I have, dear Winny!" replied Thames, abashed at his own rudeness; "my conduct is inexcusable."

"I'll excuse it, nevertheless," returned the little damsel, affectionately extending her hand to him.

"Why were you afraid to show me this picture, Winny?" asked the youth.

"Because it's not like you," was her answer.

"Well, like or not, I'm greatly pleased with it, and must beg it from you as a memorial——"

"Of what?" she interrupted, startled by his change of manner.

"Of yourself," he replied, in a mournful tone. "I shall value it highly, and will promise never to part with it. Winny, this is the last night I shall pass beneath your father's roof."

"Have you told him so?" she inquired, reproachfully.

"No; but I shall before he retires to rest."

"Then you *will* stay!" she cried, clapping her hands joyfully; "for I'm sure he won't part with you. Oh! thank you—thank you! I'm so happy!"

"Stop, Winny!" he answered, gravely; "I haven't promised yet."

"But you will—won't you?" she rejoined, looking him coaxingly in the face.

Unable to withstand this appeal, Thames gave the required promise, adding—"Oh! Winny, I wish Mr. Wood had been my father, as well as yours."

"So do I!" she cried; "for then you would have been *really* my brother. No, I don't, either; because——"

"Well, Winny?"

"I don't know what I was going to say," she added in some confusion; "only I'm sorry you were born a gentleman."

"Perhaps, I wasn't," returned Thames, gloomily, as the remembrance of Jonathan Wild's foul insinuation crossed him. "But never mind who or what I am. Give me this picture. I'll keep it for your sake."

"I'll give you something better worth keeping," she answered, detaching the ornament from her neck, and presenting it to him; "this contains a lock of my hair, and may remind you sometimes of your little sister. As to the picture, I'll keep it myself; though, if you *do* go, I shall need no memorial of *you*. I'd a good many things to say to you, besides—but you've put them all out of my head."

With this, she burst into tears, and sank with her face upon his shoulder. Thames did not try to cheer her. His own heart was too full of melancholy foreboding. He felt that he might soon be separated, perhaps forever, from the fond little creature he held in his arms, whom he had always regarded with the warmest fraternal affection, and the thought of how much she would suffer from the

separation so sensibly affected him, that he could not help joining in her grief.

From this sorrowful state he was aroused by a loud derisive whistle, followed by a still louder laugh; and, looking up, he beheld the impudent countenance of Jack Sheppard immediately before him.

"Aha!" exclaimed Jack, with a roguish wink, "I've caught you—have I?

> The carpenter's daughter was fair and free—
> Fair, and fickle, and false, was she!
> She slighted the journeyman, (meaning *me!*)
> And smiled on a gallant of high degree.
> Degree! degree!
> She smiled on a gallant of high degree.

Ha! ha! ha!"

"Jack!" exclaimed Thames, angrily.

But Sheppard was not to be silenced. He went on with his song, accompanying it with the most ridiculous grimaces:

> "When years were gone by, she began to rue
> Her love for the gentleman, (meaning *you!*)
> 'I slighted the journeyman fond,' quoth she,
> 'But where is my gallant of high degree?
> 'Where! where!
> 'Oh! where is my gallant of high degree?'

Ho! ho! ho!"

"What are you doing here?" demanded Thames.

"Oh! nothing at all," answered Jack, sneeringly, "though this room's as much mine as yours, for that matter. But I don't desire to spoil sport—not I. And, if you'll give me such a smack of your sweet lips, miss, as you've just given Thames, I'll take myself off in less than no time."

The answer to this request was a "smack," of a very

different description, bestowed upon Sheppard's outstretched face by the little damsel, as she ran out of the room.

"Odd's bodikins!" cried Jack, rubbing his cheek, "I'm in luck to-day. However, I'd rather have a blow from the daughter than the mother. I know who hits hardest. I tell you what, Thames," he added, flinging himself carelessly into a chair, "I'd give my right hand, and that's no light offer for a carpenter's 'prentice, if that little minx were half as fond of me as she is of you."

"That's not likely to be the case, if you go on in this way," replied Thames, sharply.

"Why, what the devil would you have had me do!—make myself scarce, eh? You should have tipped me the wink."

"No more of this," rejoined Thames, "or we shall quarrel."

"Who cares if we do?" retorted Sheppard, with a look of defiance.

"Jack," said the other, sternly; "don't provoke me further, or I'll give you a thrashing."

"Two can play at that game, my blood," replied Sheppard, rising, and putting himself into a posture of defense.

"Take care of yourself, then," rejoined Thames, doubling his fists and advancing towards him; "though my right arm's stiff, I can use it, as you'll find."

Sheppard was no match for his opponent, for, though he possessed more science, he was deficient in weight and strength; and after a short round, in which he had decidedly the worst of it, a well-directed hit on the *nob* stretched him at full length on the floor.

"That'll teach you to keep a civil tongue in your head for the future," observed Thames, as he helped Jack to his feet.

"I didn't mean to give offense," replied Sheppard, sulkily. "But let me tell you, it's not a pleasant sight to see the girl one likes in the arms of another."

"You want another drubbing, I perceive," said Thames, frowning.

"No, I don't. Enough's as good as a feast of the dainties you provide. I'll think no more about her. Save us!" he cried, as his glance accidentally alighted on the drawing, which Winifred had dropped in her agitation. "Is this *her* work?"

"It is," answered Thames. "Do you see any likeness?"

"Don't I," returned Jack, bitterly. "Strange!" he continued, as if talking to himself. "How very like it is!"

"Not so strange, surely," laughed Thames, "that a picture should resemble the person for whom it's intended."

"Ay, but it *is* strange how much it resembles somebody for whom it's *not* intended. It's exactly like a miniature I have in my pocket."

"A miniature! Of whom?"

"That I can't say," replied Jack, mysteriously. "But I half suspect of your father."

"My father!" exclaimed Thames, in the utmost astonishment; "let me see it!"

"Here it is," returned Jack, producing a small picture in a case set with brilliants.

Thames took it, and beheld the portrait of a young man, apparently—judging from his attire—of high rank, whose proud and patrician features certainly presented a very striking resemblance to his own.

"You're right, Jack," he said, after a pause, during which he contemplated the picture with the most fixed attention: "this must have been my father!"

"No doubt of it," answered Sheppard; "only compare

it with Winny's drawing, and you'll find they're as like as two peas in a pod."

"Where did you get it?" inquired Thames.

"From Lady Trafford's, where I took the box."

"Surely you haven't stolen it?"

"Stolen's an awkward word. But, as you perceive, I brought it away with me."

"It must be restored instantly—be the consequences what they may."

"You're not going to betray me!" cried Jack, in alarm.

"I am not," replied Thames; "but I insist upon your taking it back at once."

"Take it back yourself," retorted Jack, sullenly. "I shall do no such thing."

"Very well," replied Thames, about to depart.

"Stop!" exclaimed Jack, planting himself before the door; "do you want to get me sent across the water?"

"I want to save you from disgrace and ruin," returned Thames.

"Bah!" cried Jack, contemptuously; "nobody's disgraced and ruined, unless he's found out. I'm safe enough if you hold your tongue. Give me that picture, or I'll make you!"

"Hear me," said Thames, calmly, "you well know you're no match for me."

"Not at fisticuffs, perhaps," interrupted Jack, fiercely; "but I've my knife."

"You daren't use it."

"Try to leave the room, and see whether I daren't," returned Jack, opening the blade.

"I didn't expect this from you," rejoined Thames, resolutely. "But your threats won't prevent my leaving the room when I please, and as I please. Now, will you stand aside?"

"I won't," answered Jack, obstinately.

Thames said not another word, but marched boldly towards him, and seized him by the collar.

"Leave go!" cried Jack, struggling violently, and raising his hand, "or I'll maul you for life."

But Thames was not to be deterred from his purpose; and the strife might have terminated seriously, if a peacemaker had not appeared in the shape of little Winifred, who, alarmed by the noise, rushed suddenly into the room.

"Ah!" she screamed, seeing the uplifted weapon in Sheppard's hand, "don't hurt Thames—don't, dear Jack! If you want to kill somebody, kill me, not him."

And she flung herself between them.

Jack dropped the knife, and walked sullenly aside.

"What has caused this quarrel, Thames?" asked the little girl, anxiously.

"You," answered Jack, abruptly.

"No such thing," rejoined Thames. "I'll tell you all about it presently. But you must leave us now, dear Winny. Jack and I have something to settle between ourselves. Don't be afraid. Our quarrel's quite over."

"Are you sure of that?" returned Winifred, looking uneasily at Jack.

"Ay, ay," rejoined Sheppard; "he may do what he pleases—hang me, if he thinks proper—if *you* wish it."

With this assurance, and at the reiterated request of Thames, the little girl reluctantly withdrew.

"Come, come, Jack," said Thames, walking up to Sheppard, and taking his hand, "have done with this. I tell you once more, I'll say and do nothing to get you into trouble. Rest assured of that. But I'm resolved to see Lady Trafford. Perhaps, she may tell me whose picture this is."

"So she may," returned Jack, brightening up; "it's a good idea. I'll go with you. But you must see her

alone ; and that'll be no easy matter to manage, for she's a great invalid, and has generally somebody with her. Above all, beware of Sir Rowland Trenchard. He's as savage and suspicious as the devil himself. I should never have noticed the miniature at all, if it hadn't been for him. He was standing by, rating her ladyship—who can scarcely stir from the sofa—while I was packing up her jewels in the case, and I observed that she tried to hide a small casket from him. His back was no sooner turned, than she slipped this casket into the box. The next minute, I contrived, without either of 'em perceiving me, to convey it into my own pocket. I was sorry for what I did afterwards ; for, I don't know why, but, poor lady ! with her pale face, and black eyes, she reminded me of my mother."

"That, alone, ought to have prevented you from acting as you did, Jack," returned Thames, gravely.

"I should never have acted as I did," rejoined Sheppard, bitterly ; "if Mrs. Wood hadn't struck me. That blow made me a thief. And, if ever I'm brought to the gallows, I shall lay my death at her door."

"Well, think no more about it," returned Thames. "Do better in future."

"I will, when I've had my revenge," muttered Jack. "But, take my advice, and keep out of Sir Rowland's way, or you'll get the poor lady into trouble as well as me."

"Never fear," replied Thames, taking up his hat. "Come, let's be off."

The two boys then emerged upon the landing, and were about to descend the stairs, when the voices of Mr. and Mrs. Wood resounded from below. The storm appeared to have blown over, for they were conversing in a very amicable manner with Mr. Kneebone, who was on the point of departing.

"Quite sorry, my good friend, there should have been any misunderstanding between us," observed the woolen-draper.

"Don't mention it," returned Wood, in the conciliatory tone of one who admits he has been in the wrong; "your explanation is perfectly satisfactory."

"We shall expect you to-morrow," insinuated Mrs. Wood, "and pray, don't bring anybody with you—especially Jonathan Wild."

"No fear of that," laughed Kneebone.—"Oh! about that boy, Thames Darrell. His safety must be looked to. Jonathan's threats are not to be sneezed at. The rascal will be at work before the morning. Keep your eye upon the lad. And mind he doesn't stir out of your sight, on any pretense whatever, till I call."

"You hear that," whispered Jack.

"I do," replied Thames, in the same tone; "we haven't a moment to lose."

"Take care of yourself," said Mr. Wood, "and I'll take care of Thames. It's never a bad day that has a good ending. Good-night! God bless you!"

Upon this, there was a great shaking of hands, with renewed apologies and protestations of friendship on both sides; after which Mr. Kneebone took his leave.

"And so you really suspected me?" murmured Mrs. Wood, reproachfully, as they returned to the parlor. "Oh! you men! you men! Once get a thing into your head, and nothing will beat it out."

"Why, my love," rejoined her husband, "appearances, you must allow, were a little against you. But since you assure me *you* didn't write the letters, and Mr. Kneebone assures me *he* didn't receive them, I can't do otherwise than believe you. And I've made up my mind that a husband ought to believe only half that he hears, and nothing that he sees."

"An excellent maxim!" replied his wife, approvingly; "the best I ever heard you utter."

"I must now go and look after Thames," observed the carpenter.

"Oh! never mind him: he'll take no harm! Come with me into the parlor. I can't spare you at present. Heigho!"

"Now for it!" cried Jack, as the couple entered the room: "the coast's clear."

Thames was about to follow, when he felt a gentle grasp upon his arm. He turned, and beheld Winifred.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"I shall be back presently," replied Thames, evasively.

"Don't go, I beg of you!" she implored. "You're in danger. I overheard what Mr. Kneebone said, just now."

"Death and the devil! what a cursed interruption!" cried Jack, impatiently. "If you loiter in this way, old Wood will catch us."

"If you stir, I'll call him!" rejoined Winifred. "It's you, Jack, who are persuading my brother to do wrong. Thames," she urged, "the errand, on which you're going, can't be for any good, or you wouldn't be afraid of mentioning it to my father."

"He's coming!" cried Jack, stamping his foot with vexation. "Another moment, and it'll be too late."

"Winny, I *must* go!" said Thames, breaking from her.

"Stay, dear Thames!—stay!" cried the little girl. "He hears me not! he's gone!" she added, as the door was opened and shut with violence; "something tells me I shall never see him again!"

When her father, a moment afterwards, issued from the parlor to ascertain the cause of the noise, he found her seated on the stairs, in an agony of grief.

"Where's Thames?" he hastily inquired.

Winifred pointed to the door. She could not speak.

"And Jack?"

"Gone, too," sobbed his daughter.

Mr. Wood uttered something like an imprecation.

"God forgive me for using such a word!" he cried, in a troubled tone; "if I hadn't yielded to my wife's silly request, this wouldn't have happened!"

CHAPTER VII.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

On the same evening, in a stately chamber of a noble old mansion of Elizabeth's time, situated in Southampton Fields, two persons were seated. One of these, a lady, evidently a confirmed invalid, and attired in deep mourning, reclined upon a sort of couch, or easy-chair, set on wheels, with her head supported by cushions, and her feet resting upon a velvet footstool. A crutch, with a silver handle, stood by her side, proving the state of extreme debility to which she was reduced. It was no easy matter to determine her age; for, though she still retained a certain youthfulness of appearance, she had many marks in her countenance, usually indicating the decline of life, but which in her case were, no doubt, the result of constant and severe indisposition. Her complexion was wan and faded, except where it was tinged by a slight hectic flush, that made the want of color more palpable; her eyes were large and black, but heavy and lusterless; her cheeks sunken; her frame emaciated; her dark hair thickly scattered with gray. When younger, and in better health, she must have been eminently lovely; and there were still the remains of great beauty about her. The expression, however, which would chiefly have interested a beholder, was that of settled and profound melancholy.

Her companion was a person of no inferior condition. Indeed, it was apparent from the likeness between them, that they were nearly related. He had the same dark eyes, though lighted by a fierce flame; the same sallow

complexion; the same tall thin figure and majestic demeanor; the same proud cast of features. But here the resemblance stopped. The expression was wholly different. He looked melancholy enough, it is true. But his gloom appeared to be occasioned by remorse, rather than sorrow. No sterner head was ever beheld beneath the cowl of a monk, or the bonnet of an inquisitor. He seemed inexorable and inscrutable as fate itself.

"Well, Lady Trafford," he said, fixing a severe look upon her, "you depart for Lancashire to-morrow. Have I your final answer?"

"You have, Sir Rowland," she answered, in a feeble tone, but firmly. "You shall have the sum you require, but——"

"But what, madam?"

"Do not misunderstand me," she proceeded. "I give it to King James—not to you: for the furtherance of a great and holy cause, not for the prosecution of wild and unprofitable schemes."

Sir Rowland bit his lips to repress the answer that rose to them.

"And the will?" he said, with forced calmness. "Do you still refuse to make one?"

"I *have* made one," replied Lady Trafford.

"How?" cried her brother, starting.

"Rowland," she rejoined, "you strive in vain to terrify me into compliance with your wishes. Nothing shall induce me to act contrary to the dictates of my conscience. My will is executed, and placed in safe custody."

"In whose favor is it made?" he inquired, sternly.

"In favor of my son."

"You have no son," rejoined Sir Rowland, moodily.

"I *had* one," answered his sister, in a mournful voice; "And, perhaps, I have one still."

"If I thought so——" cried the knight, fiercely; "but this is idle," he added, suddenly checking himself. "Aliva, your child perished with its father."

"And by whom were they both destroyed?" demanded his sister, raising herself by a painful effort, and regarding him with a searching glance.

"By the avenger of his family's dishonor—by your brother," he replied, coolly.

"Brother," cried Lady Trafford, her eyes blazing with unnatural light, and her cheek suffused with a crimson stain: "Brother," she cried, lifting her thin fingers towards heaven, "as God shall judge me, I was wedded to that murdered man."

"A lie!" ejaculated Sir Rowland, furiously, "A black, and damning lie!"

"It is the truth," replied his sister, falling backwards upon the couch. "I will swear it upon the cross!"

"His name, then?" demanded the knight. "Tell me that, and I will believe you."

"Not now—not now!" she returned, with a shudder. "When I am dead you will learn it. Do not disquiet yourself. You will not have to wait long for the information. Rowland," she added, in an altered tone, "I am certain I shall not live many days. And, if you treat me in this way, you will have my death to answer for, as well as the deaths of my husband and child. Let us part in peace. We shall take an eternal farewell of each other."

"Be it so!" rejoined Sir Rowland, with concentrated fury; "but before we do part, I am resolved to know the name of your pretended husband!"

"Torture shall not wrest it from me," answered his sister, firmly.

"What motive have you for concealment?" he demanded.

"A vow," she answered—"a vow to my dead husband."

Sir Rowland looked at her for a moment, as if he meditated some terrible reply. He then arose, and, taking a few turns in the chamber, stopped suddenly before her.

"What has put it into your head that your son yet lives?" he asked.

"I have dreamed that I shall see him before I die," she rejoined.

"Dreamed!" echoed the knight, with a ghastly smile. "Is that all? Then learn from me that your hopes are visionary as their foundation. Unless he can arise from the bottom of the Thames, where he and his abhorred father lie buried, you will never behold him again in this world."

"Heaven have compassion on you, Rowland!" murmured his sister, crossing her hands, and looking upwards; "you have none on me."

"I *will* have none till I have forced the villain's name from you!" he cried, stamping the floor with rage.

"Rowland, your violence is killing me," she returned, in a plaintive tone.

"His name, I say!—his name!" thundered the knight. And he unsheathed his sword.

Lady Trafford uttered a prolonged scream, and fainted. When she came to herself, she found that her brother had quitted the room, leaving her to the care of a female attendant. Her first orders were to summon the rest of her servants to make immediate preparations for her departure for Lancashire.

"To-night, your ladyship?" ventured an elderly domestic.

"Instantly, Hobson," returned Lady Trafford; "as soon as the carriage can be brought round."

"It shall be at the door in ten minutes. Has your ladyship any further commands?"

"None whatever. Yet, stay! There is one thing I

wish you to do. Take that box, and put it into the carriage yourself. Where is Sir Rowland?"

"In the library, your ladyship. He has given orders that no one is to disturb him. But there's a person in the hall—a very odd sort of man—waiting to see him, who won't be sent away."

"Very well. Lose not a moment, Hobson."

The elderly domestic bowed, took up the case, and retired.

"Your ladyship is far too unwell to travel," remarked the female attendant, assisting her to rise; "you'll never be able to reach Manchester."

"It matters not, Norris," replied Lady Trafford: "I would rather die on the road, than be exposed to another such scene as I have just encountered!"

"Dear me!" sympathized Mrs. Norris. "I was afraid, from the scream I heard, that something dreadful had happened. Sir Rowland has a terrible temper indeed—a shocking temper! I declare he frightens me out of my senses."

"Sir Rowland is my brother," resumed Lady Trafford, coldly.

"Well, that's no reason why he should treat your ladyship so shamefully, I'm sure. Ah! how I wish poor dear Sir Cecil were alive! he'd keep him in order."

Lady Trafford sighed deeply.

"Your ladyship has never been well since you married Sir Cecil," rejoined Mrs. Norris. "For my part, I don't think you ever quite got over the accident you met with on the night of the Great Storm."

"Norris!" gasped Lady Trafford, trembling violently.

"Mercy on us! what have I said?" cried the attendant, greatly alarmed by the agitation of her mistress; "do sit down, your ladyship, while I run for the ratafia and rosa solis."

"It is past," rejoined Lady Trafford, recovering herself by a powerful effort; "but never allude to the circumstance again. Go, and prepare for our departure."

In less time than Hobson had mentioned, the carriage was announced. And Lady Trafford having been carried down-stairs, and placed within it, the postboys drove off at a rapid pace for Barnet.

CHAPTER VIII.

MICHING MALLECHO.

Sir Rowland, meantime, paced his chamber with a quick and agitated step. He was ill at ease, though he would not have confessed his disquietude even to himself. Not conceiving that his sister—feeble as she was, and yielding as she had ever shown herself to his wishes, whether expressed or implied—would depart without consulting him, he was equally surprised and enraged to hear the servants busied in transporting her to the carriage. His pride, however, would not suffer him to interfere with their proceedings; much less could he bring himself to acknowledge that he had been in the wrong, and entreat Lady Trafford to remain, though he was well aware that her life might be endangered if she traveled by night. But, when the sound of the carriage-wheels died away, and he felt that she was actually gone, his resolution failed him, and he rang the bell violently.

"My horses, Charcam," he said, as a servant appeared.

The man lingered.

"'Sdeath! why am I not obeyed?" exclaimed the knight, angrily "I wish to overtake Lady Trafford. Use despatch!"

"Her ladyship will not travel beyond St. Alban's to-night, Sir Rowland, so Mrs. Norris informed me," returned Charcam, respectfully; "and there's a person without, anxious for an audience, whom, with submission, I think your honor would desire to see."

"Ah!" exclaimed Sir Rowland, glancing significantly at Charcam, who was a confidant in his Jacobite schemes;

"is it the messenger from Orchard-Windham, from Sir William?"

"No, Sir Rowland."

"From Mr. Corbet Kynaston, then? Sir John Packington's courier was here yesterday."

"No, Sir Rowland."

"Perhaps he is from Lord Derwentwater, or Mr. Forster? News *is* expected from Northumberland."

"I can't exactly say, Sir Rowland. The gentleman didn't communicate his business to me. But I'm sure it's important."

Charcam said this, not because he knew anything about the matter; but, having received a couple of guineas to deliver the message, he, naturally enough, estimated its importance by the amount of the gratuity.

"Well, I will see him," replied the knight, after a moment's pause; "he may be from the Earl of Mar. But let the horses be in readiness. I shall ride to St. Alban's to-night."

So saying, he threw himself into a chair. And Charcam, fearful of another change in his master's present uncertain mood, disappeared.

The person, shortly afterwards ushered into the room, seemed by the imperfect light, for the evening was advancing, and the chamber darkened by heavy drapery, to be a middle-sized, middle-aged man, of rather vulgar appearance, but with a very shrewd aspect. He was plainly attired in a riding-dress and boots of the period, and wore a hanger by his side.

"Your servant, Sir Rowland," said the stranger, ducking his head, as he advanced.

"Your business, sir?" returned the other, stiffly.

The newcomer looked at Charcam. Sir Rowland waved his hand, and the attendant withdrew.

"You don't recollect me, I presume?" premised the stranger, taking a seat.

The knight, who could ill brook this familiarity, instantly arose.

"Don't disturb yourself," continued the other, nowise disconcerted by the rebuke. "I never stand upon ceremony where I know I shall be welcome. We *have* met before."

"Indeed!" rejoined Sir Rowland, haughtily; "perhaps, you will refresh my memory as to the time and place."

"Let me see. The time was the 26th of November, 1703; the place, the Mint in Southwark. I have a good memory, you perceive, Sir Rowland."

The knight staggered as if struck by a mortal wound. Speedily recovering himself, however, he rejoined, with forced calmness, "You are mistaken, sir. I was in Lancashire, at our family seat, at the time you mention."

The stranger smiled incredulously.

"Well, Sir Rowland," he said, after a brief pause, during which the knight regarded him with a searching glance, as if endeavoring to recall his features; "I will not gainsay your words. You are in the right to be cautious, till you know with whom you have to deal; and, even then, you can't be too wary. Avow nothing, believe nothing, give nothing for nothing, is my own motto. And it's a maxim of universal application; or, at least, of universal practise. I am not come here to play the part of your father-confessor. I am come to serve you."

"In what way, sir?" demanded Trenchard, in astonishment.

"You will learn anon. You refuse me your confidence. I applaud your prudence; it is, however, needless. Your history, your actions, nay, your very thoughts, are better known to me than to your spiritual adviser."

"Make good your assertions," cried Trenchard, furiously, "or——"

"To the proof," interrupted the stranger, calmly.

"You are the son of Sir Montacute Trenchard, of Ashton-Hall, near Manchester. Sir Montacute had three children —two daughters and yourself. The eldest, Constance, was lost by the carelessness of a servant during her infancy, and has never since been heard of: the youngest, Aliva, is the present Lady Trafford. I merely mention these circumstances to show the accuracy of my information."

"If this is the extent of it, sir," returned the knight, ironically, "you may spare yourself further trouble. These particulars are familiar to all who have any title to the knowledge."

"Perhaps so," rejoined the stranger; "but I have others in reserve, not so generally known. With your permission, I will go on in my own way. Where I am in error, you can set me right.—Your father, Sir Montacute Trenchard, who had been a loyal subject of King James the Second, and borne arms in his service, on the abdication of that monarch turned his back upon the Stuarts, and would never afterwards recognize their claims to the crown. It was said that he received an affront from James, in the shape of a public reprimand, which his pride could not forgive. Be this as it may be, though a Catholic, he died a friend to the Protestant succession."

"So far you are correct," observed Trenchard; "still, this is no secret."

"Suffer me to proceed," replied the stranger. "The opinions entertained by the old knight, naturally induced him to view with displeasure the conduct of his son, who warmly espoused the cause he had deserted. Finding remonstrances of no avail, he had recourse to threats; and, when threats failed, he adopted more decided measures."

"Ha!" ejaculated Trenchard.

"As yet," pursued the stranger, "Sir Montacute had placed no limit to his son's expenditure. He did not

quarrel with Rowland's profusion, for his own revenues were ample; but he *did* object to the large sums lavished by him in the service of a faction he was resolved not to support. Accordingly, the old knight reduced his son's allowance to a third of its previous amount; and, upon further provocation, he even went so far as to alter his will in favor of his daughter, Aliva, who was then betrothed to her cousin, Sir Cecil Trafford."

"Proceed, sir," said Trenchard, breathing hard.

"Under these circumstances, Rowland did what any other sensible person would do. Aware of his father's inflexibility of purpose, he set his wits to work to defeat the design. He contrived to break off his sister's match; and this he accomplished so cleverly, that he maintained the strictest friendship with Sir Cecil. For two years he thought himself secure; and, secretly engaged in the Jacobite schemes of the time, in which, also, Sir Cecil was deeply involved, he began to relax in his watchfulness over Aliva. About this time—namely, in November, 1703—while young Trenchard was in Lancashire, and his sister in London on a visit, he received a certain communication from his confidential servant, Davies, which at once destroyed his hopes. He learnt that his sister was privately married—the name or rank of her husband could not be ascertained—and living in retirement in an obscure dwelling in the Borough, where she had given birth to a son. Rowland's plans were quickly formed, and as quickly executed. Accompanied by Sir Cecil, who still continued passionately enamored of his sister, and to whom he represented that she had fallen a victim to the arts of a seducer, he set off at fiery speed for the metropolis. Arrived there, their first object was to seek out Davies, by whom they were conducted to the lady's retreat,—a lone habitation, situated on the outskirts of Saint George's Fields in Southwark. Refused admittance,

they broke open the door. Aliva's husband, who passed by the name of Darrell, confronted them sword in hand. For a few minutes he kept them at bay. But, urged by his wife's cries, who was more anxious for the preservation of her child's life than her own, he snatched up the infant, and made his escape from the back of the premises. Rowland and his companions instantly started in pursuit, leaving the lady to recover as she might. They tracked the fugitive to the Mint; but, like hounds at fault, they here lost all scent of their prey. Meantime, the lady had overtaken them; but, terrified by the menaces of her vindictive kinsmen, she did not dare to reveal herself to her husband, of whose concealment on the roof of the very house the party were searching she was aware. Aided by an individual, who was acquainted with a secret outlet from the tenement, Darrell escaped. Before his departure, he gave his assistant a glove. That glove is still preserved. In her endeavor to follow him, Aliva met with a severe fall, and was conveyed away, in a state of insensibility, by Sir Cecil. She was supposed to be lifeless; but she survived the accident, though she never regained her strength. Directed by the same individual, who had helped Darrell to steal a march upon him, Rowland, with Davies, and another attendant, continued the pursuit. Both the fugitive and his chasers embarked on the Thames. The elements were wrathful as their passions. The storm burst upon them in its fury. Unmindful of the terrors of the night, unscared by the danger that threatened him, Rowland consigned his sister's husband and his sister's child to the waves."

"Bring your story to an end, sir," said Trenchard, who had listened to the recital with mingled emotions of rage and fear.

"I have nearly done," replied the stranger. — "As

Rowland's whole crew perished in the tempest, and he only escaped by miracle, he fancied himself free from detection. And for twelve years he has been so; until his long security, well-nigh obliterating remembrance of the deed, has bred almost a sense of innocence within his breast. During this period Sir Montacute has been gathered to his fathers. His title has descended to Rowland: his estates to Aliva. The latter has, since, been induced to unite herself to Sir Cecil, on terms originating with her brother, and which, however strange and unprecedented, were acquiesced in by the suitor."

Sir Rowland looked bewildered with surprise.

"The marriage was never consummated," continued the imperturbable stranger. "Sir Cecil is no more. Lady Trafford, supposed to be childless, broken in health and spirits, frail both in mind and body, is not likely to make another marriage. The estate must, ere long, revert to Sir Rowland."

"Are you man or fiend?" exclaimed Trenchard, staring at the stranger, as he concluded his narration.

"You are complimentary, Sir Rowland," returned the other, with a grim smile.

"If you *are* human," rejoined Trenchard, with stern emphasis, "I insist upon knowing whence you derived your information?"

"I might refuse to answer the question, Sir Rowland. But I am not indisposed to gratify you. Partly, from your confessor; partly, from other sources."

"My confessor!" ejaculated the knight, in the extremity of surprise; "has *he* betrayed his sacred trust?"

"He has," replied the other, grinning; "and this will be a caution to you in future, how you confide a secret of consequence to a priest. I should as soon think of trusting a woman. Tickle the ears of their reverences with any idle nonsense you please: but tell them nothing you

care to have repeated. I was once a disciple of St. Peter myself, and speak from experience."

"Who are you?" ejaculated Trenchard, scarcely able to credit his senses.

"I'm surprised you've not asked that question before, Sir Rowland. It would have saved me much circumlocution, and you some suspense. My name is Wild—Jonathan Wild."

And the great thief-taker indulged himself in a chuckle at the effect produced by this announcement. He was accustomed to such surprises, and enjoyed them.

Sir Rowland laid his hand upon his sword.

"Mr. Wild," he said, in a sarcastic tone, but with great firmness; "a person of your well-known sagacity must be aware that some secrets are dangerous to the possessor."

"I am fully aware of it, Sir Rowland," replied Jonathan, coolly; "but I have nothing to fear; because, in the first place, it will be to your advantage not to molest me; and in the second, I am provided against all contingencies. I never hunt the human tiger without being armed. My janizaries are without. One of them is furnished with a packet containing the heads of the statement I have just related, which, if I don't return at a certain time, will be laid before the proper authorities. I have calculated my chances, you perceive."

"You have forgotten that you are in my power," returned the knight, sternly; "and that all your allies cannot save you from my resentment."

"I can, at least, protect myself," replied Wild, with provoking calmness. "I am accounted a fair shot, as well as a tolerable swordsman, and I will give proof of my skill in both lines, should occasion require it. I have had a good many desperate engagements in my time, and have generally come off victorious. I bear the marks of

some of them about me still," he continued, taking off his wig, and laying bare a bald skull, covered with cicatrices and plates of silver. "This gash," he added, pointing to one of the larger scars, "was a wipe from the hanger of Tom Thurland, whom I apprehended for the murder of Mrs. Knap. This wedge of silver," pointing to another, "which would mend a coffee-pot, serves to stop up a breach made by Will Colthurst, who robbed Mr. Hearl on Hounslow-Heath. I secured the dog after he had wounded me. This fracture was the handiwork of Jack Parrot (otherwise called Jack the Grinder), who broke into the palace of the Bishop of Norwich. Jack was a comical scoundrel, and made a little too free with his grace's best burgundy, as well as his grace's favorite housekeeper. The Bishop, however, to show him the danger of meddling with the church, gave him a dance at Tyburn for his pains. Not a scar but has its history. The only inconvenience I feel from my shattered noddle is an incapacity to drink. But that's an infirmity shared by a great many sounder heads than mine. The hardest bout I ever had was with a woman—Sally Wells, who was afterwards lagged for shoplifting. She attacked me with a carving-knife, and, when I had disarmed her, the jade bit off a couple of fingers from my left hand. Thus, you see, I've never hesitated, and never *shall* hesitate to expose my life where anything is to be gained. My profession has hardened me!"

And, with this, he coolly readjusted his peruke.

"What do you expect to gain by this interview, Mr. Wild?" demanded Trenchard, as if he had formed a sudden resolution.

"Ah! now we come to business," returned Jonathan, rubbing his hands, gleefully. "These are my terms, Sir Rowland," he added, taking a sheet of paper from his pocket, and pushing it towards the knight.

Trenchard glanced at the document.

"A thousand pounds," he observed, gloomily, "is a heavy price to pay for doubtful secrecy, when *certain silence* might be so cheaply procured."

"You would purchase it at the price of your head," replied Jonathan, knitting his brows. "Sir Rowland," he added, savagely, and with somewhat of the look of a bull-dog before he flies at his foe, "if it were my pleasure to do so, I could crush you with a breath. You are wholly in my power. Your name, with the fatal epithet of 'dangerous' attached to it, stands foremost on the list of Disaffected now before the Secret Committee. I hold a warrant from Mr. Walpole for your apprehension."

"Arrested!" exclaimed Trenchard, drawing his sword.

"Put up your blade, Sir Rowland," rejoined Jonathan, resuming his former calm demeanor; "King James the Third will need it. I have no intention of arresting you. I have a different game to play; and it'll be your own fault if you don't come off the winner. I offer you my assistance on certain terms. The proposal is so far from being exorbitant, that it should be trebled if I had not a fellow-feeling in the cause. To be frank with you, I have an affront to requite, which can be settled at the same time, and in the same way with your affair. That's worth something to me; for I don't mind paying for revenge. After all, a thousand pounds is a trifle to rid you of an upstart, who may chance to deprive you of tens of thousands."

"Did I hear you aright?" asked Trenchard, with startling eagerness.

"Certainly," replied Jonathan, with the most perfect *sang froid*, "I'll undertake to free you from the boy. That's part of the bargain."

"Is he alive?" vociferated Trenchard.

"To be sure," returned Wild; "he's not only alive, but likely for life, if we don't clip the thread."

Sir Rowland caught at a chair for support, and passed his hand across his brow, on which the damp had gathered thickly.

"The intelligence seems new to you. I thought I'd been sufficiently explicit," continued Jonathan. "Most persons would have guessed my meaning."

"Then it was *not* a dream!" ejaculated Sir Rowland in a hollow voice, and as if speaking to himself. "I *did* see them on the platform of the bridge—the child and his preserver! They were *not* struck by the fallen ruin, nor whelmed in the roaring flood—or, if they *were*, they escaped as I escaped. God! I have cheated myself into a belief that the boy perished! And now my worst fears are realized—he lives!"

"As yet," returned Jonathan, with fearful emphasis.

"I cannot—dare not injure him," rejoined Trenchard, with a haggard look, and sinking, as if paralyzed, into a chair.

Jonathan laughed scornfully.

"Leave him to me," he said. "He sha'n't trouble you further."

"No," replied Sir Rowland, who appeared completely prostrated. "I will struggle no longer with destiny. Too much blood has been shed already."

"This comes of fine feelings!" muttered Jonathan, contemptuously. "Give me your thorough-paced villain. But I sha'n't let him off thus. I'll try a strong dose.—Am I to understand that you intend to plead guilty, Sir Rowland?" he added. "If so, I may as well execute my warrant."

"Stand off, sir!" exclaimed Trenchard, starting suddenly backwards.

"I knew that would bring him to," thought Wild.

"Where is the boy?" demanded Sir Rowland.

"At present, under the care of his preserver—one Owen Wood, a carpenter, by whom he was brought up."

"Wood!" exclaimed Trenchard—"of Wych Street?"

"The same."

"A boy from his shop was here a short time ago. Could it be him you mean?"

"No. That boy was the carpenter's apprentice, Jack Sheppard. I've just left your nephew."

At this moment Charcam entered the room.

"Beg pardon, Sir Rowland," said the attendant; "but there is a boy from Mr. Wood, with a message for Lady Trafford."

"From whom?" vociferated Trenchard.

"From Mr. Wood the carpenter."

"The same who was here just now!"

"No, Sir Rowland, a much finer boy."

"'Tis he, by Heaven!" cried Jonathan; "this is lucky. Sir Rowland," he added, in a deep whisper, "do you agree to my terms?"

"I do," answered Trenchard, in the same tone.

"Enough!" rejoined Wild; "he shall not return."

"Have you acquainted him with Lady Trafford's departure?" said the knight, addressing Charcam, with as much composure as he could assume.

"No, Sir Rowland," replied the attendant, "as you proposed to ride to Saint Alban's to night, I thought you might choose to see him yourself. Beside, there's something odd about the boy; for, though I questioned him pretty closely concerning his business, he declined answering my questions, and said he could only deliver his message to her ladyship. I thought it better not to send him away till I'd mentioned the circumstance to you."

"You did right," returned Trenchard.

"Where is he?" asked Jonathan.

"In the hall," replied Charcam.

"Alone?"

"Not exactly, sir. There's another lad at the gate waiting for him—the same who was here just now, that Sir Rowland was speaking of, who fastened up the jewel-case for her ladyship."

"A jewel-case!" exclaimed Jonathan. "Ah, I see it all!" he cried with a quick glance. "Jack Sheppard's fingers are lime-twigs. Was anything missed after the lad's departure, Sir Rowland?"

"Not that I'm aware of," said the knight—"Stay, something occurs to me." And he conferred apart with Jonathan.

"That's it!" cried Wild, when Trenchard concluded. "This young fool is come to restore the article—whatever it may be—which Lady Trafford was anxious to conceal, and which his companion purloined. It's precisely what such a simpleton would do. We have him as safe as a linnet in a cage; and could wring his neck round as easily. Oblige me by acting under my guidance in the matter, Sir Rowland. I'm an old hand at such things. Harkee," he added, "Mr. What's-your-name?"

"Charcam," replied the attendant, bowing.

"Very well, Mr. Charcoal, you may bring in the boy. But not a word to him of Lady Trafford's absence—mind that. A robbery has been committed, and your master suspects this lad as an accessory to the offense. He, therefore, desires to interrogate him. It will be necessary to secure his companion; and, as you say, he is not in the house, some caution must be used in approaching him, or he may chance to take to his heels, for he's a slippery little rascal. When you've seized him cough thrice, thus —and two rough-looking gentlemen will make their appearance. Don't be alarmed by their manners, Mr.

Charcoal. They're apt to be surly to strangers, but it soon wears off. The gentleman with the red beard will relieve you of your prisoner. The other must call a coach as quickly as he can."

"For whom, sir?" inquired Charcam.

"For me—his master, Mr. Jonathan Wild."

"Are *you* Mr. Jonathan Wild?" asked the attendant, in great trepidation.

"I *am*, Charcoal. But don't let my name frighten you. Though," said the thief-taker, with a complacent smile, "all the world seems to tremble at it. Obey my orders, and you've nothing to fear. About them quickly. Lead the lad to suppose that he'll be introduced to Lady Trafford. You understand me, Charcoal."

The attendant did *not* understand him. He was confounded by the presence in which he found himself. But, not daring to confess his want of comprehension, he made a profound reverence and retired.

CHAPTER IX.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE THEFT.

"How do you mean to act, sir?" inquired Trenchard, as soon as they were left alone.

"As circumstances shall dictate, Sir Rowland," returned Jonathan. "Something is sure to arise in the course of the investigation, of which I can take advantage. If not, I'll convey him to St. Giles's roundhouse on my own responsibility."

"Is this your notable scheme?" asked the knight, scornfully.

"Once there," proceeded Wild, without noticing the interruption, "he's as good as in his grave. The constable, Sharples, is in my pay. I can remove the prisoner at any hour of the night I think fit; and I *will* remove him. You must know Sir Rowland—for I've no secrets from you—that, in the course of my business, I've found it convenient to become the owner of a small Dutch sloop; by means of which I can transmit any light ware, such as gold watches, rings, and plate, as well as occasionally a bank or goldsmith's note, which has been *spoken with* by way of the mail—you understand me?—to Holland or Flanders, and obtain a secure and ready market for them. This vessel is now in the river, off Wapping. Her cargo is nearly shipped. She will sail at early dawn to-morrow for Rotterdam. Her commander, Rykhart Van Galgebrok, is devoted to my interests. As soon as he gets into blue water he'll think no more of pitching the boy overboard than of lighting his pipe. This will be safer than cutting his throat on shore. I've tried the plan and found it answer. The Northern Ocean keeps a secret better

than the Thames, Sir Rowland. Before midnight, your nephew shall be safe beneath the hatches of the Zeeslang."

"Poor child!" muttered Trenchard, abstractedly; "the whole scene upon the river is passing before me. I hear the splash in the water—I see the white object floating like a sea-bird on the tide—it will not sink!"

"'Sblood!" exclaimed Jonathan, in a tone of ill-disguised contempt; "It won't do to indulge these fancies now. Be seated, and calm yourself."

"I have often conjured up some frightful vision of the dead," murmured the knight, "but I never dreamed of an interview with the living."

"It'll be over in a few minutes," rejoined Jonathan, impatiently, "in fact, it'll be over too soon for me. I like such interviews. But we waste time. Have the goodness to affix your name to that memorandum, Sir Rowland. I require nothing, you see, till my share of the contract is fulfilled."

Trenchard took up a pen.

"It's the boy's death-warrant," observed Jonathan, with a sinister smile.

"I cannot sign it," returned Trenchard.

"Damnation!" exclaimed Wild, with a snarl, that displayed his glistening fangs to the farthest extremity of his mouth "I'm not to be trifled with thus. That paper *must* be signed, or I take my departure."

"Go, sir," rejoined the knight, haughtily.

"Ay, ay, I'll go, fast enough!" returned Jonathan, putting his hands into his pocket, "but not alone, Sir Rowland."

At this juncture the door was flung open, and Charcam entered, dragging in Thames, whom he held by the collar, and who struggled in vain to free himself from the grasp imposed upon him.

"Here's one of the thieves, Sir Rowland!" cried the attendant. "I was only just in time. The young rascal had learnt from some of the women-servants that Lady Trafford was from home, and was in the very act of making off when I got down-stairs. Come along, my Newgate bird!" he continued, shaking him with great violence.

Jonathan gave utterance to a low whistle.

"If things had gone smoothly," he thought, "I should have cursed the fellow's stupidity. As it is, I'm not sorry for the blunder."

Trenchard, meanwhile, whose gaze was fixed upon the boy, became livid as death, but he moved not a muscle.

"'Tis he!" he mentally ejaculated.

"What do you think of your nephew, Sir Rowland?" whispered Jonathan, who sat with his back towards Thames, so that his features were concealed from the youth's view. "It would be a thousand pities, wouldn't it, to put so promising a lad out of the way?"

"Devil!" exclaimed the knight, fiercely; "Give me the paper?"

Jonathan hastily picked up the pen, and presented it to Trenchard, who attached his signature to the document.

"If I *am* the devil," observed Wild, "as some folks assert, and I myself am not unwilling to believe, you'll find that I differ from the generally received notions of the arch-fiend, and faithfully execute the commands of those who confide their souls to my custody."

"Take hence this boy, then," rejoined Trenchard; "his looks unman me."

"Of what am I accused?" asked Thames, who, though a good deal alarmed at first, had now regained his courage.

"Of robbery," replied Jonathan in a thundering voice, and suddenly confronting him. "You're charged with assisting your comrade, Jack Sheppard, to purloin certain

articles of value from a jewel-case belonging to Lady Trafford. Aha!" he continued, producing a short silver staff, which he carried constantly about with him, and uttering a terrible imprecation, "I see you're confounded. Down on your marrow-bones, sirrah! Confess your guilt, and Sir Rowland may yet save you from the gallows."

"I've nothing to confess," replied Thames, boldly; "I've done no wrong. Are *you* my accuser?"

"I am," replied Wild; "have you anything to allege to the contrary?"

"Only this," returned Thames: "that the charge is false and malicious, and that *you* know it to be so."

"Is that all?" retorted Jonathan. "Come, I must search you, my youngster!"

"You sha'n't touch me," rejoined Thames; and, suddenly bursting from Charcam, he threw himself at the feet of Trenchard. "Hear me, Sir Rowland!" he cried. "I am innocent. I have stolen nothing. This person—this Jonathan Wild—whom I beheld for the first time scarcely an hour ago in Wych Street, is, I know not why, my enemy. He has sworn that he'll take away my life!"

"Bah!" interrupted Jonathan. "You won't listen to this nonsense, Sir Rowland!"

"If you *are* innocent, boy," said the knight, controlling his emotion; "you have nothing to apprehend. But what brought you here?"

"Excuse me, Sir Rowland. I cannot answer that question. My business is with Lady Trafford.'

"Are you aware that I am her ladyship's brother?" returned the knight. "She has no secrets from me."

"Possibly not," replied Thames in some confusion; "but I am not at liberty to speak."

"Your hesitation is not in your favor," observed Trenchard, sternly.

"Will he consent to be searched?" inquired Jonathan.

"No," rejoined Thames, "I won't be treated like a common felon, if I can help it."

"You shall be treated according to your deserts, then," said Jonathan, maliciously. And, in spite of the boy's resistance, he plunged his hands into his pockets, and drew forth the miniature.

"Where did you get this from?" asked Wild, greatly surprised at the result of his investigation.

Thames returned no answer.

"I thought as much," continued Jonathan. "But we'll find a way to make you open your lips presently. Bring in his comrade," he added, in a whisper to Charcam; "I'll take care of him. And don't neglect my instructions this time." Upon which, with an assurance that he would not do so, the attendant departed.

"You can, of course, identify this picture as Lady Trafford's property?" pursued Jonathan, with a meaning glance, as he handed it to the knight.

"I can," replied Trenchard. "Ha!" he exclaimed, with a sudden start, as his glance fell upon the portrait; "how came this into your possession, boy?"

"Why don't you answer, sirrah?" cried Wild, in a savage tone, and striking him with the silver staff. "Can't you speak?"

"I don't choose," replied Thames sturdily; "and your brutality sha'n't make me."

"We'll see that," replied Jonathan, dealing him another and more violent blow.

"Let him alone," said Trenchard, authoritatively. "I have another question to propose. Do you know whose portrait this is?"

"I do not," replied Thames, repressing his tears; "but I believe it to be the portrait of my father."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the knight, in astonishment. "Is your father alive?"

"No," returned Thames; "he was assassinated while I was an infant."

"Who told you this is his portrait?" demanded Trenchard.

"My heart," rejoined Thames, firmly; "which now tells me I am in the presence of his murderer."

"That's me," interposed Jonathan; "a thief-taker is always a murderer in the eyes of a thief. I'm almost sorry your suspicions are unfounded, if your father in any way resembled you, my youngster. But I can tell you who'll have the pleasure of hanging your father's son; and that's a person not a hundred miles distant from you at this moment—ha! ha!"

As he said this, the door was opened, and Charcam entered, accompanied by a dwarfish, shabby-looking man, in a brown serge frock, with coarse Jewish features, and a long red beard. Between the Jew and the attendant came Jack Sheppard; while a crowd of servants, attracted by the news, that the investigation of a robbery was going forward, lingered at the doorway in hopes of catching something of the proceedings.

When Jack was brought in, he cast a rapid glance around him, and perceiving Thames in the custody of Jonathan, instantly divined how matters stood. As he looked in this direction, Wild gave him a significant wink, the meaning of which he was not slow to comprehend.

"Get it over quickly," said Trenchard, in a whisper to the thief-taker.

Jonathan nodded assent.

"What's your name?" he said, addressing the audacious lad, who was looking about him as coolly as if nothing material was going on.

"Jack Sheppard," returned the boy, fixing his eyes upon a portrait of the Earl of Mar. "Who's that queer cove in the full-bottomed wig?"

"Attend to me, sirrah," rejoined Wild, sternly. "Do you know this picture?" he added, with another significant look, and pointing to the miniature.

"I do," replied Jack, carelessly.

"That's well. Can you inform us whence it came?"

"I should think so."

"State the facts, then."

"It came from Lady Trafford's jewel-box."

Here a murmur of amazement arose from the assemblage outside.

"Close the door!" commanded Trenchard, impatiently.

"In my opinion, Sir Rowland," suggested Jonathan, "you'd better allow the court to remain open."

"Be it so," replied the knight, who saw the force of this reasoning. "Continue the proceedings."

"You say that the miniature was abstracted from Lady Trafford's jewel-box," said Jonathan, in a loud voice. "Who took it thence?"

"Thames Darrell; the boy at your side."

"Jack!" cried Thames, in indignant surprise.

But Sheppard took no notice of the exclamation.

A loud buzz of curiosity circulated among the domestics; some of whom—especially the females—leaned forward to obtain a peep at the culprit."

"Si—lence!" vociferated Charcam, laying great emphasis on the last syllable.

"Were you present at the time of the robbery?" pursued Jonathan.

"I was," answered Sheppard.

"And will swear to it?"

"I will."

"Liar!" ejaculated Thames.

"Enough!" exclaimed Wild, triumphantly. "Close the court, Mr. Charcoal. They've heard quite enough for

my purpose," he muttered, as his orders were obeyed, and the domestics excluded. "It's too late to carry 'em before a magistrate now, Sir Rowland; so, with your permission, I'll give 'em a night's lodging in Saint Giles's roundhouse. You, Jack Sheppard, have nothing to fear, as you've become evidence against your accomplice. To-morrow, I shall carry you before Justice Walters, who'll take your information; and I've no doubt but Thames Darrell will be fully committed. Now for the cage, my pretty canary bird. Before we start, I'll accommodate you with a pair of ruffles." And he proceeded to handcuff his captive.

"Hear me!" cried Thames, bursting into tears. "I am innocent. I could not have committed this robbery. I have only just left Wych Street. Send for Mr. Wood, and you'll find that I've spoken the truth."

"You'd better hold your peace, my lad," observed Jonathan, in a menacing tone.

"Lady Trafford would not have thus condemned me!" cried Thames.

"Away with him," exclaimed Sir Rowland, impatiently.

"Take the prisoners below, Nab, said Jonathan, addressing the dwarfish Jew; "I'll join you in an instant."

The bearded miscreant seized Jack by the waist, and Thames by the nape of the neck, and marched off, like the ogre in the fairy tale, with a boy under each arm, while Charcam brought up the rear.

CHAPTER X.

MOTHER AND SON.

They had scarcely been gone a moment, when a confused noise was heard without, and Charcam re-entered the room, with a countenance of the utmost bewilderment and alarm.

"What's the matter with the man?" demanded Wild.

"Her ladyship——" faltered the attendant.

"What of her?" cried the knight. "Is she returned?"

"Y—e—s, Sir Rowland," stammered Charcam.

"The devil!" ejaculated Jonathan. "Here's a cross-bite."

"But that's not all, your honor," continued Charcam; "Mrs. Norris says she's dying."

"Dying!" echoed the knight.

"Dying, Sir Rowland. She was taken dreadfully ill on the road, with spasms and short breath, and swoonings—worse than ever she was before. And Mrs. Norris was so frightened that she ordered the postboys to drive back as fast as they could. She never expected to get her ladyship home alive."

"My God!" cried Trenchard, stunned by the intelligence; "I have killed her."

"No doubt," rejoined Wild, with a sneer; "but don't let all the world know it."

"They're lifting her out of the carriage," interposed Charcam; "will it please your honor to send for some advice and the chaplain?"

"Fly for both," returned Sir Rowland, in a tone of bitter anguish.

"Stay!" interposed Jonathan. "Where are the boys?"

"In the hall."

"Her ladyship will pass through it?"

"Of course; there's no other way."

"Then, bring them into this room, the first thing—quick! They must not meet, Sir Rowland," he added, as Charcam hastened to obey his instructions.

"Heaven has decreed it otherwise," replied the knight, dejectedly. "I yield to fate."

"Yield to nothing," returned Wilde, trying to reassure him; "above all, when your designs prosper. Man's fate is in his own hands. You are your nephew's executioner, or he is yours. Cast off this weakness. The next hour makes or mars you forever. Go to your sister, and do not quit her till all is over. Leave the rest to me."

Sir Rowland moved irresolutely towards the door, but recoiled before a sad spectacle. This was his sister, evidently in the last extremity. Borne in the arms of a couple of assistants, and preceded by Mrs. Norris, wringing her hands and weeping, the unfortunate lady was placed upon a couch. At the same time, Charcam, who seemed perfectly distracted by the recent occurrences, dragged in Thames, leaving Jack Sheppard outside in the custody of the dwarfish Jew.

"Hell's curses!" muttered Jonathan between his teeth; "that fool will ruin all. Take him away," he added, striding up to Charcam.

"Let him remain," interposed Trenchard.

"As you please, Sir Rowland," returned Jonathan, with affected indifference; "but I'm not going to hunt the deer for another to eat the ven'son, depend on't"

But seeing that no notice was taken of the retort, he drew a little aside, and folded his arms, muttering, "The whim will soon be over. She can't last long. I can pull the strings of this stiff-necked puppet as I please."

Sir Rowland, meantime, threw himself on his knees beside his sister, and, clasping her chilly fingers within his own, besought her forgiveness in the most passionate terms. For a few minutes she appeared scarcely sensible of his presence. But, after some restoratives had been administered by Mrs. Norris, she revived a little.

"Rowland!" she said, in a faint voice, "I have not many minutes to live. Where is Father Spencer? I must have absolution. I have something that weighs heavily upon my mind."

Sir Rowland's brow darkened.

"I have sent for him, Aliva," he answered; "he will be here directly, with your medical advisers."

"They are useless," she returned; "medicine cannot save me now."

"Dear sister——"

"I should die happy, if I could behold my child."

"Comfort yourself, then, Aliva. You *shall* behold him."

"You are mocking me, Rowland. Jests are not for seasons like this."

"I am not, by heaven," returned the knight, solemnly. "Leave us, Mrs. Norris, and do not return till Father Spencer arrives."

"Your ladyship—" hesitated Norris.

"Go!" said Lady Trafford; "it is my last request."

And her faithful attendant, drowned in tears, withdrew, followed by the two assistants.

Jonathan stepped behind a curtain.

"Rowland," said Lady Trafford, regarding him with a look of indescribable anxiety, "you have assured me that I shall behold my son. Where is he?"

"Within this room," replied the knight.

"Here!" shrieked Lady Trafford.

"Here," repeated her brother. "But calm your-

self, dear sister, or the interview will be too much for you.

"I *am* calm—quite calm, Rowland," she answered, with lips whose agitation belied her words. "Then the story of his death was false. I knew it. I was sure you could not have the heart to slay a child—an innocent child. God forgive you!"

"May He, indeed, forgive me!" returned Trenchard, crossing himself devoutly; "but my guilt is not the less heavy, because your child escaped. This hand consigned him to destruction, but another was stretched forth to save him. The infant was rescued from a watery grave by an honest mechanic, who has since brought him up as his own son."

"Blessings upon him!" cried Lady Trafford, fervently. "But trifle with me no longer. Moments are ages now. Let me see my child, if he is really here?"

"Behold him!" returned Trenchard, taking Thames (who had been a mute but deeply interested witness of the scene) by the hand, and leading him towards her.

"Ah!" exclaimed Lady Trafford, exerting all her strength. "My sight is failing me. Let me have more light, that I may behold him. Yes!" she screamed, "these are his father's features! It is—it is my son!"

"Mother!" cried Thames; "are you indeed, my mother?"

"I am indeed—my own sweet boy!" she sobbed, pressing him tenderly to her breast.

"Oh!—to see you thus!" cried Thames, in an agony of affliction.

"Don't weep, my love," replied the lady, straining him still more closely to her. "I am happy—quite happy now."

During this touching interview, a change had come over Sir Rowland, and he half repented of what he had done.

"You can no longer refuse to tell me the name of this youth's father, Aliva," he said.

"I dare not, Rowland," she answered. "I cannot break my vow. I will confide it to Father Spencer, who will acquaint you with it when I am no more. Undraw the curtain, love," she added to Thames, "that I may look at you."

"Ha!" exclaimed her son, starting back, as he obeyed her, and disclosed Jonathan Wild.

"Be silent," said Jonathan, in a menacing whisper.

"What have you seen?" inquired Lady Trafford.

"My enemy!" replied her son.

"Your enemy!" she returned, imperfectly comprehending him. "Sir Rowland is your uncle—he will be your guardian—he will protect you. Will you not, brother?"

"Promise," said a deep voice in Trenchard's ear.

"He will kill me," cried Thames. "There is a man in this room who seeks my life."

"Impossible!" rejoined his mother.

"Look at these fetters," returned Thames, holding up his manacled wrists; "they were put on by my uncle's command."

"Ah!" shrieked Lady Trafford.

"Not a moment is to be lost," whispered Jonathan to Trenchard. "His life or yours?"

"No one shall harm you more, my dear," cried Lady Trafford. "Your uncle *must* protect you. It will be his interest to do so. He will be dependent on you."

"Do what you please with him," muttered Trenchard to Wild.

"Take off these chains, Rowland," said Lady Trafford, "instantly—I command you."

"*I* will," replied Jonathan, advancing, and rudely seizing Thames.

"Mother!" cried the son, "help!"

"What is this?" shrieked Lady Trafford, raising herself on the couch, and extending her hands towards him. "Oh God! would you take him from me?—would you murder him?"

"His father's name!—and he is free," rejoined Rowland, holding her arms.

"Release him first—and I will disclose it!" cried Lady Trafford; "on my soul, I will!"

"Speak then!" returned Rowland.

"Too late!" shrieked the lady falling heavily backwards—"too late!—oh!"

Heedless of her cries, Jonathan passed a handkerchief tightly over her son's mouth, and forced him out of the room.

When he returned, a moment or so afterwards, he found Sir Rowland standing by the lifeless body of his sister. His countenance was almost as white and rigid as that of the corpse by his side.

"This is your work," said the knight, sternly.

"Not entirely," replied Jonathan, calmly; "though I shouldn't be ashamed of it if it were. After all, you failed in obtaining the secret from her, Sir Rowland. Women are hypocrites to the last—true only to themselves."

"Peace!" cried the knight, fiercely.

"No offense," returned Jonathan. "I was merely about to observe that *I* am in possession of her secret."

"You!"

"Didn't I tell you that the fugitive Darrell gave me a glove? But we'll speak of this hereafter. You can *purchase* the information from me whenever you're so disposed. I sha'n't drive a hard bargain. To the point, however. I came back to say, that I've placed your

nephew in a coach; and, if you'll be at my lock in the Old Bailey an hour after midnight, you shall hear the last tidings of him."

"I will be there," answered Trenchard, gloomily.

"You'll not forget the thousand, Sir Rowland—short accounts, you know."

"Fear nothing. You shall have your reward."

"Thank'ee—thank'ee. My house is the next door to the Cooper's Arms, in the Old Bailey, opposite Newgate. You'll find me at supper."

So saying, he bowed and departed.

"That man should have been an Italian bravo," murmured the knight, sinking into a chair: "he has neither fear nor compunction. Would I could purchase his apathy as easily as I can procure his assistance."

Soon after this Mrs. Norris entered the room, followed by Father Spencer. On approaching the couch, they found Sir Rowland senseless, and extended over the dead body of his unfortunate sister.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MOHOCKS.

Jonathan Wild, meanwhile, had quitted the house. He found a coach at the door, with the blinds carefully drawn up, and ascertained from a tall, ill-looking, though tawdrily-dressed fellow, who held his horse by the bridle, and whom he addressed as Quilt Arnold, that the two boys were safe inside, in the custody of Abraham Mendez, the dwarfish Jew. As soon as he had delivered his instructions to Quilt, who with Abraham constituted his body-guard, or janizaries, as he termed them, Jonathan mounted his steed, and rode off at a gallop. Quilt was not long in following his example. Springing upon the box, he told the coachman to make the best of his way to Saint Giles's. Stimulated by the promise of something handsome to drink, the man acquitted himself to admiration in the management of his lazy cattle. Crack went the whip, and away floundered the heavy vehicle through the deep ruts of the ill-kept road, or rather lane (for it was little better), which then led across Southampton Fields. Skirting the noble gardens of Montague House (now, we need scarcely say, the British Museum), the party speedily reached Great Russell Street—a quarter described by Strype, in his edition of old Stowe's famous *Survey*, "as being graced with the best buildings in all Bloomsbury, and the best inhabited by the nobility and gentry, especially the north side, as having gardens behind the houses, and the prospect of the pleasant fields up to Hampstead and Highgate; insomuch that this place, by physicians, is esteemed the most healthful of any in

London." Neither of the parties outside bestowed much attention upon these stately and salubriously-situated mansions; indeed, as it was now not far from ten o'clock, and quite dark, they could scarcely discern them. But, in spite of his general insensibility to such matters, Quilt could not help commenting upon the delicious perfume wafted from the numerous flower-beds past which they were driving. The coachman answered by a surly grunt, and, plying his whip with redoubled zeal, shaped his course down Dyot Street; traversed that part of Holborn which is now called Broad Street, and where two ancient alms-houses were then standing in the middle of that great thoroughfare, exactly opposite the opening of Compton Street; and, driving under a wide gateway on the left, soon reached a more open space, surrounded by mean habitations, coach-houses, and stables, called Kendrick Yard, at the further end of which Saint Giles's round-house was situated.

No sooner did the vehicle turn the corner of this yard, than Quilt became aware, from the tumultuous sounds that reached his ears, as well as from the flashing of various lanterns at the door of the roundhouse, that some disturbance was going on; and apprehensive of a rescue, if he drew up in the midst of the mob, he thought it prudent to come to a halt. Accordingly, he stopped the coach, dismounted, and hastened towards the assemblage, which he was glad to find consisted chiefly of a posse of watchmen, and other guardians of the night. Quilt, who was an ardent lover of mischief, could not help laughing most heartily at the rueful appearance of these personages. Not one of them but bore the marks of having been engaged in a recent and severe conflict. Quarter-staves, bludgeons, brown-bills, lanterns, swords, and sconces were alike shivered; and, to judge from the sullied state of their habiliments, the claret must have

been tapped pretty freely. Never was heard such a brawling as these unfortunate wights kept up. Oaths exploded like shells from a battery in full fire, accompanied by threats of direst vengeance against the individuals who had maltreated them. Here might be seen a poor fellow whose teeth were knocked down his throat, spluttering out the most tremendous menaces, and gesticulating like a madman: there, another, whose nose was partially slit, vented imprecations and lamentations in the same breath. On the right stood a bulky figure, with a broken rattle hanging out of his great-coat pocket, who held up a lantern to his battered countenance to prove to the spectators that both his orbs of vision were darkened: on the left, a meager constable had divested himself of his shirt, to bind up with greater convenience a gaping cut in the arm.

"So, the Mohocks have been at work, I perceive," remarked Quilt, as he drew near the group.

"Faith, an' you may say that," returned a watchman, who was wiping a ruddy stream from his brow; "they've broken the paice, and our pates into the bargain. But shure*ly* I'd know that vice," he added, turning his lantern toward the janizary. "Ah! Quilt Arnold, my man, is it you? By the powers! I'm glad to see you The sight o' your 'andsome phiz alleys does me good."

"I wish I could return the compliment, Terry. But your cracked skull is by no means a pleasing spectacle. How came you by the hurt, eh?"

"How did I come by it?—that's a nate question. Why, honestly enough. It was lent me by a countryman of mine; but I paid him back in his own coin—ha! ha!"

"A countryman of yours, Terry?"

"Ay, and a noble one, too, Quilt—more's the pity, you've heard of the Marquis of Slaughterford, belike?"

"Of course; who has not? He's the leader of the

Mohocks, the general of the Scourers, the prince of rakes, the friend of the surgeons and glaziers, the terror of your tribe, and the idol of the girls!"

"That's him to a hair!" cried Terence, rapturously. "Och! he's a broth of a boy!"

"Why, I thought he'd broken your head, Terry?"

"Phooh! that's nothing! A piece o' plaster 'll set all to rights; and Terry O'Flaherty's not the boy to care for the stroke of a supple-jack. Besides, didn't I tell you that I giv' him as good as he brought—and better! I jist touched him with my 'Evenin' Star,' as I call this shillelah," said the watchman, flourishing an immense bludgeon, the knob of which appeared to be loaded with lead, "and, by Saint Patrick! down he cum'd like a bullock."

"Zounds!" exclaimed Quilt, "did you kill him?"

"Not quite," replied Terence, laughing; "but I brought him to his senses."

"By depriving him of 'em, eh? But I'm sorry you hurt his lordship, Terry. Young noblemen ought to be indulged in their frolics. If they *do*, now and then, run away with a knocker, paint a sign, beat the watch, or huff a magistrate, they *pay* for their pastime, and that's sufficient. What more could any reasonable man—especially a watchman—desire? Besides, the Marquis is a devilish fine fellow, and a particular friend of mine. There's not his peer among the peerage."

"Och! if he's a friend o' yours, my dear joy, there's no more to be said; and right sorry am I, I struck him. But, blood-an'-'ouns! man, if ould Nick himself were to hit me a blow, I'd be afther givin' him another."

"Well, well—wait awhile," returned Quilt; "his lordship won't forget you. He's as generous as he's frolicsome."

As he spoke, the door of the roundhouse was opened,

and a stout man, with a lantern in his hand, presented himself at the threshold.

"There's Sharples," cried Quilt.

"Whist!" exclaimed Terence: "he elevates his glim. By Jasus! he's about to spake to us."

"Gem'men o' the votch!" cried Sharples, as loudly as a wheezy cough would permit him, "my noble pris'ner—ough! ough;—the Markis o' Slaughterford—"

Further speech was cut short by a volley of execrations from the angry guardians of the night.

"No Mohocks! No Scourers!" cried the mob.

"Hear! hear!" vociferated Quilt.

"His lordship desires me to say—ough! ough!"

Fresh groans and hisses.

"Von't you hear me?—ough! ough!" demanded Sharples, after a pauses.

"By all means," rejoined Quilt.

"Raise your vice, and lave off coughin'," added Terence.

"The long and the short o' the matter's this, then," returned Sharples with dignity, "The Markis begs your acceptance o' ten guineas to drink his health."

The hooting was instantaneously changed to cheers.

"And his lordship, furthermore, requests me to state," proceeded Sharples in a hoarse tone, "that he'll be responsible for the doctor's bills of all such gem'men as have received broken pates, or been other*wise* damaged in the fray—ough! ough!"

"Hurrah!" shouted the mob.

"We're all damaged—we've all got broken pates!" cried a dozen voices.

"Ay, good-luck to him! so we have," rejoined Terence; "but we've no objection to take out the doctor's bill in drink."

"None whatever," replied the mob.

"Your answer, gem'men?" demanded Sharples.

"Long life to the Markis, and we accept his honorable proposal," responded the mob.

"Long life to the Marquis?" reiterated Terence; "he's an honor to ould Ireland!"

"Didn't I tell you how it would be?" remarked Quilt.

"Troth, and so did you," returned the watchman; "but I couldn't belave it. In futur', I'll keep the 'Evenin' Star' for his lordship's enemies."

"You'd better," replied Quilt. "But bring your glim this way. I've a couple of kinchens in yonder rattler, whom I wish to place under old Sharples' care."

"Be handy, then," rejoined Terence, "or I'll lose my share of the smart-money."

With the assistance of Terence, and a linkboy who voluntered his services, Quilt soon removed the prisoners from the coach, and leaving Sheppard to the custody of Abraham, proceeded to drag Thames towards the roundhouse. Not a word had been exchanged between the two boys on the road. Whenever Jack attempted to speak, he was checked by an angry growl from Abraham; and Thames, though his heart was full almost to bursting, felt no inclination to break the silence. His thoughts, indeed, were too painful for utterance, and so acute were his feelings, that, for some time, they quite overcame him. But his grief was of short duration. The elastic spirits of youth resumed their sway; and, before the coach stopped, his tears had ceased to flow. As to Jack Sheppard, he appeared utterly reckless and insensible, and did nothing but whistle and sing the whole way.

While he was dragged along in the manner just described, Thames looked around to ascertain, if possible, where he was; for he did not put entire faith in Jonathan's threat of sending him to the roundhouse, and was apprehensive of something even worse than imprison-

ment. The aspect of the place, so far as he could discern through the gloom, was strange to him; but, chancing to raise his eyes above the level of the surrounding habitations, he beheld, relieved against the somber sky, the tall steeple of Saint Giles's church, the precursor of the present structure, which was not erected till some fifteen years later. He recognized this object at once. Jonathan had not deceived him.

"What's this here kinchen *in* for?" asked Terence, as he and Quilt strode along, with Thames between them.

"What for?" rejoined Quilt, evasively.

"Oh! nothin' partickler—mere curiosity," replied Terence. "By the powers!" he added, turning his lantern full upon the face of the captive, "he's a nice genn-teel-lookin' kiddy, I must say. Pity he's ta'en to bad ways so airly."

"You may spare me your compassion, friend," observed Thames; "I am falsely detained."

"Of course," rejoined Quilt, maliciously; "every thief is so. If we were to wait till a prig was rightfully nabbed, we might tarry till doomsday. We never supposed you helped yourself to a picture set with diamonds —not we!"

"Is the guv'ner consarned in this job?"—asked Terence, in a whisper.

"He is," returned Quilt, significantly. "Zounds! what's that?" he cried, as the noise of a scuffle was heard behind them. "The other kid's given my partner the slip. Here, take this youngster, Terry; my legs are lighter than old Nab's." And, committing Thames to the care of the watchman, he darted after the fugitive.

"Do you wish to earn a rich reward, my good friend?" said Thames to the watchman, as soon as they were left alone.

"Is it by lettin' you go, my darlin', that I'm to airn

it?" inquired Terence. "If so, it won't pay. You're Misther Wild's pris'ner, and worse luck to it!"

"I don't ask you to liberate me," urged Thames; "but will you convey a message for me?"

"Where to, honey?"

"To Mr. Wood's, the carpenter in Wych Street. He lives near the Black Lion."

"The Black Lion!" echoed Terence. "I know the house well; by the same token that it's a flash crib. Och! many a mug o' bubb have I drained wi' the landlord, Joe Hind. And so Misther Wudd lives near the Black Lion, eh?"

"He does," replied Thames. "Tell him that I—his adopted son, Thames Darrell—am detained here by Jonathan Wild."

"Thames Ditton—is that your name?"

"No," replied the boy, impatiently; "Darrell—Thames Darrell."

"I'il not forget it. It's a mighty quare 'un, though. I never yet heard of a Christian as was named after the Shannon or the Liffey; and the Thames is no better than a dirty puddle compared wi' them two noble strames. But then you're an adopted son, and that makes all the difference. People do call their unlawful children strange names. Are you quite sure you haven't another alyas, Masther Thames Ditton?"

"Darrell, I tell you. Will you go? You'll be paid handsomely for your trouble."

"I don't mind the throuble," hesitated Terence, who was really a good-hearted fellow at the bottom; "and I'd like to sarve you if I could, for you look like a gentleman's son, and that goes a great way wi' me. But if Misther Wild were to find out that I thwarted his schames——"

"I'd not be in your skin for a trifle," interrupted Quilt,

who, having secured Sheppard, and delivered him to Abraham, now approached them unawares; "and it sha'n't be my fault if he don't hear of it."

"'Ouns!" ejaculated Terence, in alarm, "would you turn snitch on your old pal, Quilt?"

"Ay, if he plays a cross," returned Quilt. "Come along, my sly shaver. With all your cunning, we're more than a match for you."

"But not for me," growled Terence, in an undertone.

"Remember!" cried Quilt, as he forced the captive along.

"Remember the devil!" retorted Terence, who had recovered his natural audacity. "Do you think I'm afraid of a beggarly thief-taker and his myrmidons? Not I. Master Thames Ditton, I'll do your biddin'; and you, Misther Quilt Arnold, may do your worst, I defy you."

"Dog!" exclaimed Quilt, turning fiercely upon him, "do you threaten?"

But the watchman eluded his grasp, and, mingling with the crowd, disappeared.

CHAPTER XII.

SAINT GILES'S ROUNDHOUSE.

SAINT GILES'S ROUNDHOUSE was an old, detached fabric, standing in an angle of Kendrick Yard. Originally built, as its name imports, in a cylindrical form, like a modern Martello tower, it had undergone from time to time so many alterations, that its symmetry was, in a great measure, destroyed. Bulging out more in the middle than at the two extremities, it resembled an enormous cask set on its end—a sort of Heidelberg tun on a large scale; and this resemblance was increased by the small circular aperture—it hardly deserved to be called a door—pierced, like the bung-hole of a barrel, through the side of the structure, at some distance from the ground, and approached by a flight of wooden steps. The prison was two stories high, with a flat roof, surmounted by a gilt vane fashioned like a key; and, possessing considerable internal accommodation, had in its day lodged some thousands of disorderly personages. The windows were small, and strongly grated, looking in front on Kendrick Yard, and at the back upon the spacious burial ground of Saint Giles's Church. Lights gleamed from the lower rooms, and, on a nearer approach to the building, the sound of revelry might be heard from within.

Warned of the approach of the prisoners by the increased clamor, Sharples, who was busied in distributing the Marquis's donation, affected to throw the remainder of the money among the crowd, though, in reality, he kept back a couple of guineas, which he slipped into his sleeve, and, running hastily up the steps, unlocked the

door. He was followed more leisurely by the prisoners; and, during their ascent, Jack Sheppard made a second attempt to escape by ducking suddenly down, and endeavoring to pass under his conductor's legs. The dress of the dwarfish Jew was not, however, favorable to this expedient. Jack was caught, as in a trap, by the pendant tails of Abraham's long frock; and, instead of obtaining his release by his ingenuity, he only got a sound thrashing.

Sharples received them at the threshold, and holding his lantern towards the prisoners to acquaint himself with their features, nodded to Quilt, between whom and himself some secret understanding seemed to subsist, and then closed and barred the door.

"Vell," he growled, addressing Quilt, "you know who's here, I suppose?"

"To be sure I do," replied Quilt; "my noble friend, the Marquis of Slaughterford. What of that?"

"Vot o' that!" echoed Sharples, peevishly: "Everythin'. Vot am I to do vith these young imps, eh?"

"What you generally do with your prisoners, Mr. Sharples," replied Quilt; "lock 'em up."

"That's easily said. But, suppose I've no place to lock 'em up in, how then?"

Quilt looked a little perplexed. He passed his arm under that of the constable, and drew him aside.

"Vell, vell," growled Sharples, after he had listened to the other's remonstrances, "it shall be done. But it's confounded inconwenient. One don't often get sich a vindfal as the Markis——"

"Or such a customer as Mr. Wild," edged in Quilt.

"Now, then, Saint Giles!" interposed Sheppard, "are we to be kept here all night?"

"Eh day!" exclaimed Sharples; "wot newfledged bantam's this?"

"One that wants to go to roost," replied Sheppard. "So, stir your stumps, Saint Giles; and, if you mean to lock us up, use despatch."

"Comin'! comin'!" returned the constable, shuffling towards him.

"Coming!—so is midnight—so is Jonathan Wild," retorted Jack, with a significant look at Thames.

"Have you never an out-o'-the-vay corner, into vich you could shtow these troublesome warmint?" observed Abraham. "The guv'ner 'll be here afore midnight."

Darrell's attention was drawn to the latter part of this speech by a slight pressure on his foot. And, turning at the touch, he perceived Sheppard's glance fixed meaningly upon him.

"Stow it, Nab!" exclaimed Quilt, angrily; "the kinchen's awake."

"Awake! to be sure I am, my flash cove," replied Sheppard; "I'm down as a hammer."

"I've just bethought me of a crib as 'll serve their turn," interposed Sharples; "at any rate, they'll be out o' the vay, and as safe as two chicks in a coop."

"Lead the way to it then, Saint Giles," said Jack, in a tone of mock authority.

The place in which they stood was a small entrance-chamber, cut off, like the segment of a circle, from the main apartment (of which it is needless to say it originally constituted a portion) by a stout wooden partition. A door led to the inner room; and it was evident, from the peals of merriment and other noises, that ever and anon resounded from within, that this chamber was occupied by the Marquis and his friends. Against the walls hung an assortment of staves, brown-bills (weapons then borne by the watch), muskets, handcuffs, great-coats, and lanterns. In one angle of the room stood a disused fireplace, with a rusty grate and broken chimneypiece; in

the other there was a sort of box, contrived between the wall and the boards, that looked like an apology for a cupboard. Towards this box Sharples directed his steps, and, unlocking a hatch in the door, disclosed a recess scarcely as large, and certainly not as clean, as a dog kennel.

"Vill this do?" demanded the constable, taking the candle from the lantern, the better to display the narrow limits of the hole. "I call this ere crib the Little-Ease, arter the runaway prentices' cells in Guildhall. I *have* squeezed three kids into it afore now. To be sure," he added, lowering his tone, "they wos little 'uns, and one on 'em was smothered—ough! ough!—how this cough chokes me!"

Sheppard, meanwhile, whose hands were at liberty, managed to possess himself, unperceived, of the spike of a halbert, which was lying, apart from the pole, upon a bench near him. Having secured this implement, he burst from his conductor, and, leaping into the hatch, as clowns generally spring into the clock-faces, when in pursuit of harlequin in the pantomime—that is, back foremost—broke into a fit of loud and derisive laughter, kicking his heels merrily all the time against the boards. His mirth, however, received an unpleasant check; for Abraham, greatly incensed by his previous conduct, caught him by the legs, and pushed him with such violence into the hole, that the point of the spike, which he had placed in his pocket, found its way through his clothes to the flesh, inflicting a slight, but painful wound. Jack, who had something of the Spartan in his composition, endured his martyrdom without flinching; and carried his stoical indifference so far, as even to making a mocking grimace in Sharples' face, while that amiable functionary thrust Thames into the recess beside him.

"How do you like your quarters, saucebox?" asked Sharples, in a jeering tone.

"Better than your company, Saint Giles," replied Sheppard; "so, shut the door, and make yourself scarce."

"That boy 'll never rest till he finds his way to Bridewell," observed Sharples.

"Or the street," returned Jack: "mind my words, the prison's not built that can keep me."

"We'll see that, young hempseed," replied Sharples. shutting the hatch furiously in his face, and locking it. "If you get out o' that cage, I'll forgive you. Now, come along, gem'men, and I'll show you some precious sport."

The two janizaries followed him as far as the entrance to the inner room, when Abraham, raising his finger to his lips, and glancing significantly in the direction of the boys, to explain his intention to his companions, closed the door after them, and stole softly back again, planting himself near the recess.

For a few minutes all was silent. At length Jack Sheppard observed:—"The coast's clear. They're gone into the next room."

Darrell returned no answer.

"Don't be angry with me, Thames," continued Sheppard, in a tone calculated, as he thought, to appease his companion's indignation. "I did all for the best, as I'll explain."

"I won't reproach you, Jack," said the other, sternly. "I've done with you."

"Not quite, I hope," rejoined Sheppard. "At all events, I've not done with you. If you owe your confinement to me, you shall owe your liberation to me also."

"I'd rather lie here forever, than be indebted to *you* for my freedom," returned Thames.

"I've done nothing to offend you," persisted Jack.

"Nothing!" echoed the other, scornfully. "You've perjured yourself."

"That's my own concern," rejoined Sheppard. "An oath weighs little with me, compared with your safety."

"No more of this," interrupted Thames, "You make the matter worse by these excuses."

"Quarrel with me as much as you please, Thames, but hear me," returned Sheppard. "I took the course I pursued to serve you."

"Tush!" cried Thames; "you accused me to screen yourself."

"On my soul, Thames, you wrong me!" replied Jack, passionately. "I'd lay down my life for yours."

"And you expect me to believe you after what has passed?"

"I do; and, more than that, I expect you to thank me."

"For procuring my imprisonment?"

"For saving your life."

"How?"

"Listen to me, Thames. You're in a more serious scrape than you imagine. I overheard Jonathan Wild's instructions to Quilt Arnold, and though he spoke in slang, and in an undertone, my quick ears, and acquaintance with the thieves' lingo, enabled me to make out every word he uttered. Jonathan is in league with Sir Rowland to make away with you. You are brought here that their designs may be carried into effect with greater security. Before morning, unless we can effect an escape, you'll be kidnapped or murdered, and your disappearance attributed to the negligence of the constable."

"Are you sure of this?" asked Thames, who, though as brave a lad as need be, could not repress a shudder at the intelligence.

"Certain. The moment I entered the room, and found

you a prisoner in the hands of Jonathan Wild, I guessed how matters stood, and acted accordingly. Things haven't gone quite as smoothly as I anticipated; but they might have been worse. I *can* save you, and *will*. But, say we're friends."

"You're not deceiving me!" said Thames, doubtfully.

"I am not, by Heaven!" replied Sheppard, firmly.

"Don't swear, Jack, or I shall distrust you. I can't give you my hand; but you may take it."

"Thank you! thank you!" faltered Jack, in a voice full of emotion. "I'll soon free you from these bracelets."

"You needn't trouble yourself," replied Thames. "Mr. Wood will be here presently."

"Mr. Wood!" exclaimed Jack, in surprise. "How have you managed to communicate with him?"

Abraham, who had listened attentively to the foregoing conversation— not a word of which escaped him— now drew in his breath, and brought his ear closer to the boards.

"By means of the watchman who had the charge of me," replied Thames.

"Curse him!" muttered Abraham.

"Hist!" exclaimed Jack. "I thought I heard a noise. Speak lower. Somebody may be on the watch—perhaps that old ginger-hackled Jew."

"I don't care if he is," rejoined Thames, boldly. "He'll learn that his plans will be defeated."

"He may learn how to defeat yours," replied Jack.

"So he may," rejoined Abraham, aloud, "so he may."

"Death and fiends!" exclaimed Jack; "the old thief *is* there. I knew it. You've betrayed yourself, Thames."

"Vot o' that?" chuckled Abraham. "*You* can shave him, you know."

"I *can*," rejoined Jack; "and you too, old Aaron, if I'd a razor."

"How soon do you expect Mishter Vudd?" inquired the janizary, tauntingly.

"What's that to you?" retorted Jack, surlily.

"Because I shouldn't like to be out o' the vay ven he arrives," returned Abraham in a jeering tone; "it vouldn't be vell bred."

"Vouldn't it?" replied Jack, mimicking his snuffling voice, "then shtay vere you are, and be cursed to you."

"It's all up," muttered Thames. "Mr. Wood will be intercepted. I've destroyed my only chance."

"Not your *only* chance, Thames," returned Jack, in the same undertone; "but your best. Never mind. We'll turn the tables upon 'em yet. Do you think we could manage that old clothesman between us, if we got out of this box?"

"I'd manage him myself, if my arms were free," replied Thames boldly.

"Shpeak up, vill you?" cried Abraham, rapping his knuckles against the hatch. "I likes to hear vot you says. You *can* have no shecrets from me."

"Vy don't you talk to your partner, or Saint Giles, if you vant conversation, Aaron?" asked Jack, slily.

"Because they're in the next room, and the door's shut; that's vy, my jack-a-dandy!" replied Abraham unsuspiciously.

"Oh! they are—are they?" muttered Jack, triumphantly; "that'll do. Nor for it, Thames! Make as great a row as you can to divert his attention."

With this, he drew the spike from his pocket; and, drowning the sound of the operation by whistling, singing, shuffling, and other noises, contrived in a few minutes to liberate his companion from the handcuffs.

"Now, Jack," cried Thames, warmly grasping Sheppard's hand, "you are my friend again. I freely forgive you."

Sheppard cordially returned the pressure; and, cautioning Thames, "not to let the ruffles drop, or they might tell a tale," began to warble the following fragment of a robber melody:—

"Oh! give me a chisel, a knife, or a file,
And the dubsmen shall find that I'll do it in style!
Tol-de-rol!"

"Vot the devil are you about, noisy?" inquired Abraham.

"Practising singing, Aaron," replied Jack. "Vot are you?"

"Practising patience," growled Abraham.

"Not before it's needed," returned Jack, aloud; adding in a whisper, "get upon my shoulders, Thames. Now you're up, take this spike. Feel for the lock, and prise it open—you don't need to be told *how*. When it's done, I'll push you through. Take care of the old clothesman, and leave the rest to me.

When the turnkey, next morning, stepp'd into his room,
The sight of the hole in the wall struck him dumb;
The sheriff's black bracelets lay strewn on the ground,
But the lad that had worn 'em could nowhere be found.
Tol-de-rol!"

As Jack concluded his ditty, the door flew open with a crash and Thames sprang through the aperture.

This maneuver was so suddenly executed that it took Abraham completely by surprise. He was standing at the moment close to the hatch, with his ear at the key-hole, and received a severe blow in the face. He staggered back a few paces; and, before he could recover himself, Thames tripped up his heels, and, placing the point of the spike at his throat, threatened to stab him if he attempted to stir, or cry out. Nor had Jack been idle

all this time. Clearing the recess the instant after his companion, he flew to the door of the inner room, and locking it, took out the key. The policy of this step was immediately apparent. Alarmed by the noise of the scuffle, Quilt and Sharples rushed to the assistance of their comrade. But they were too late. The entrance was barred against them; and they had the additional mortification of hearing Sheppard's loud laughter at their discomfiture.

"I told you the prison wasn't built that could hold me," cried Jack.

"You're not out yet, you young hound," rejoined Quilt, striving ineffectually to burst open the door.

"But I soon shall be," returned Jack; "take these," he added, flinging the handcuffs against the wooden partition, "and wear 'em yourself."

"Halloo, Nab!" vociferated Quilt. "What the devil are you about? Will you allow yourself to be beaten by a couple of kids?"

"Not if I can help it," returned Abraham, making a desperate effort to regain his feet. "By my shalvation, boy," he added, fiercely, "if you don't take your hand off my peard, I'll shtrangle you."

"Help me, Jack!" shouted Thames, "or I sha'n't be able to keep the villain down."

"Stick the spike into him, then," returned Sheppard, coolly, "while I unbar the outlet."

But Thames had no intention of following his friend's advice. Contenting himself with brandishing the weapon in the Jew's eyes, he exerted all his force to prevent him from rising.

While this took place, while Quilt thundered at the inner door, and Jack drew back the bolts of the outer, a deep, manly voice was heard chanting—as if in contempt of the general uproar—the following strain:—

With pipe and punch upon the board,
And smiling nymphs around us;
No tavern could more mirth afford
Than old Saint Giles's roundhouse!
The roundhouse! the roundhouse!
The jolly—jolly roundhouse!

"The jolly, jolly roundhouse!" chorused Sheppard, as the last bar yielded to his efforts. "Hurrah! come along, Thames; we're free."

"Not sho fasht—not sho fasht!" cried Abraham, struggling with Thames, and detaining him; "if you go, you musht take me along vid you."

"Save yourself, Jack!" shouted Thames, sinking beneath the superior weight and strength of his opponent; "leave me to my fate!"

"Never," replied Jack, hurrying towards him. And, snatching the spike from Thames, he struck the janizary a severe blow on the head. "I'll make sure work this time," he added, about to repeat the blow.

"Hold!" interposed Thames, "he can do no more mischief. Let us be gone."

"As you please," returned Jack, leaping up; "but I feel devilishly inclined to finish him. However, it would only be robbing the hangman of his dues."

With this, he was preparing to follow his friend, when their egress was prevented by the sudden appearance of Jonathan Wild and Blueskin.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MAGDALENE.

The household of the worthy carpenter, it may be conceived, was thrown into the utmost confusion and distress by the unaccountable disappearance of the two boys. As time wore on, and they did not return, Mr. Wood's anxiety grew so insupportable, that he seized his hat with the intention of sallying forth in search of them, though he did not know whither to bend his steps, when his departure was arrested by a gentle knock at the door.

"There he is!" cried Winifred, starting up joyfully, and proving by the exclamation that her thoughts were dwelling upon one subject only. "There he is!"

"I fear not," said her father, with a doubtful shake of the head. "Thames would let himself in; and Jack generally finds an entrance through the back-door or the shop-window, when he has been out at untimely hours. But, go and see who it is, love. Stay! I'll go myself."

His daughter, however, anticipated him. She flew to the door, but returned the next minute, looking deeply disappointed, and bringing the intelligence that it was "only Mrs Sheppard."

"Who?" almost screamed Mrs. Wood.

"Jack Sheppard's mother," answered the little girl, dejectedly; "she has brought a basket of eggs from Willesden, and some flowers for you."

"For me!" vociferated Mrs. Wood, in indignant surprise. "Eggs for *me!*" You mistake, child. They must be for your father."

"No; I'm quite sure she said they're for you," replied Winifred; "but she *does* want to see father"

"I thought as much," sneered Mrs. Wood.

"I'll go to her directly," said Wood, bustling towards the door. "I dare say she has called to inquire about Jack."

"I dare say no such thing," interposed his better half, authoritatively; "remain where you are, sir."

"At all events, let me send her away, my dear," supplicated the carpenter, anxious to avert the impending storm.

"Do you hear me?" cried the lady, with increasing vehemence. "Stir a foot at your peril."

"But, my love," still remonstrated Wood, "you know I'm going to look after the boys——"

"After Mrs. Sheppard, you mean, sir," interrupted his wife, ironically. "Don't think to deceive me by your false pretenses. Marry, come up! I'm not so easily deluded. Sit down, I command you. Winny, show the person into this room. I'll see her myself; and that's more than she bargained for, I'll be sworn."

Finding it useless to struggle further, Mr. Wood sank submissively into a chair, while his daughter hastened to execute her arbitrary parent's commission.

"At length, I have my wish," continued Mrs. Wood, regarding her husband with a glance of vindictive triumph. "I shall behold the shameless hussy, face to face; and, if I find her as good-looking as she's represented, I don't know what I'll do in the end; but I'll begin by scratching her eyes out."

In this temper, it will naturally be imagined that Mrs. Wood's reception of the widow, who at that moment was ushered into the room by Winifred, was not particularly kind and encouraging. As she approached, the carpenter's wife eyed her from head to foot, in the hope of find-

ing something in her person or apparel to quarrel with. But she was disappointed. Mrs. Sheppard's dress—extremely neat and clean, but simply fashioned, and of the plainest and most unpretending material—offered nothing assailable; and her demeanor was so humble, and her looks so modest, that—if she had been ill-looking—she might, possibly, have escaped the shafts of malice preparing to be leveled against her. But, alas! she was beautiful—and beauty is a crime not to be forgiven by a jealous woman.

As the lapse of time and change of circumstances have wrought a remarkable alteration in the appearance of the poor widow, it may not be improper to notice it here. When first brought under consideration, she was a miserable and forlorn object; squalid in attire, haggard in looks, and emaciated in frame. Now, she was the very reverse of all this. Her dress, it has just been said, was neatness and simplicity itself. Her figure, though slight, had all the fulness of health; and her complexion—still pale, but without its former sickly cast, —contrasted agreeably, by its extreme fairness, with the dark brows and darker lashes that shaded eyes which, if they had lost some of their original brilliancy, had gained infinitely more in the soft and chastened lustre that replaced it. One marked difference between the poor outcast, who, oppressed by poverty and stung by shame, had sought temporary relief in the stupefying draught—that worst "medicine of a mind diseased"—and those of the same being, freed from her vices, and restored to comfort and contentment, if not to happiness, by a more prosperous course of events, was exhibited in the mouth. For the fresh and feverish hue of lip which years ago characterized this feature, was now substituted a pure and wholesome bloom, evincing a total change of habits; and, though the coarse character of the

mouth remained in some degree unaltered, it was so modified in expression, that it could no longer be accounted a blemish. In fact, the whole face had undergone a transformation. All its better points were improved, while the less attractive ones (and they were few in comparison) were subdued, or removed. What was yet more worthy of note was, that the widow's countenance had an air of refinement about it, of which it was utterly destitute before, and which seemed to intimate that her true position in society was far above that wherein accident had placed her.

"Well, Mrs. Sheppard," said the carpenter, advancing to meet her, and trying to look as cheerful and composed as he could; "what brings you to town, eh?—Nothing amiss, I trust?"

"Nothing whatever, sir," answered the widow. "A neighbor offered me a drive to Paddington; and, as I haven't heard of my son for some time, I couldn't resist the temptation of stepping on to inquire after him, and to thank you for your great goodness to us both. I've brought a little garden-stuff and a few new-laid eggs for you, ma'am," she added, turning to Mrs. Wood, who appeared to be collecting her energies for a terrible explosion, "in the hope that they may prove acceptable. Here's a nosegay for you, my love," she continued, opening her basket, and presenting a fragrant bunch of flowers to Winifred, "if your mother will allow me to give it you."

"Don't touch it, Winny!" screamed Mrs. Wood, "it may be poisoned."

"I'm not afraid, mother," said the little girl, smelling at the bouquet. "How sweet these roses are! Shall I put them into water?"

"Put them where they came from," replied Mrs. Wood, severely, "and go to bed."

"But, mother, mayn't I sit up to see whether Thames returns?" implored Winifred.

"What can it matter to you whether he returns or not, child?" rejoined Mrs. Wood, sharply. "I've spoken. And my word's law—with *you*, at least," she added, bestowing a cutting glance upon her husband.

The little girl uttered no remonstrance; but, replacing the flowers in the basket, burst into tears, and withdrew.

Mrs. Sheppard, who witnessed this occurrence with dismay, looked timorously at Wood, in expectation of some hint being given as to the course she had better pursue; but, receiving none, for the carpenter was too much agitated to attend to her, she ventured to express a fear that she was intruding.

"Intruding!" echoed Mrs. Wood; "to be sure you are! I wonder how you dare show your face in this house, hussy!"

"I thought you sent for me, ma'am," replied the widow, humbly.

"So I did," retorted Mrs. Wood; "and I did so to see how far your effrontery would carry you."

"I'm sure I'm very sorry. I hope I haven't given any unintentional offense?" said the widow, again meekly appealing to Wood.

"Don't exchange glances with him under my very nose, woman!" shrieked Mrs. Wood; "I'll not bear it. Look at me, and answer me one question. And, mind! no prevaricating—nothing but the truth will satisfy me."

Mrs. Sheppard raised her eyes, and fixed them upon her interrogator.

"Are you not that man's mistress?" demanded Mrs. Wood, with a look meant to reduce her supposed rival to the dust.

"I am no man's mistress," answered the widow, crim-

soning to her temples, but preserving her meek deportment and humble tone.

"That's false!" cried Mrs. Wood. "I'm too well acquainted with your proceedings, madam, to believe that. Profligate women are never reclaimed. *He* has told me sufficient of you——"

"My dear," interposed Wood, "for goodness' sake—"

"I *will* speak," screamed his wife, totally disregarding the interruption; "I *will* tell this worthless creature what I know about her,—and what I think of her."

"Not now, my love—not now," entreated Wood.

"Yes, *now!*" rejoined the infuriated dame; "perhaps I may never have another opportunity. She has contrived to keep out of my sight up to this time, and I've no doubt she'll keep out of it altogether for the future."

"That was my doing, dearest," urged the carpenter; "I was afraid, if you saw her, that some such scene as this might occur."

"Hear me, madam, I beseech you," interposed Mrs. Sheppard, "and, if it please you to visit your indignation on any one, let it be upon me, and not on your excellent husband, whose only fault is in having bestowed his charity upon so unworthy an object as myself."

"Unworthy, indeed!" sneered Mrs. Wood.

"To him I owe everything," continued the widow; "life itself—nay, more than life,—for, without his assistance, I should have perished, body and soul. He has been a father to me and my child."

"I never doubted the latter point, I assure you, madam," observed Mrs. Wood.

"You have said," pursued the widow, "that she, who has once erred, is irreclaimable. Do not believe it, madam, It is not so. The poor wretch, driven by desperation to the commission of a crime which her soul abhors, is no more beyond the hope of reformation than she is without

the pale of mercy. I have suffered—I have sinned—I have repented. And, though neither peace nor innocence can be restored to my bosom ; though tears cannot blot out my offenses, nor sorrow drown my shame ; yet, knowing that my penitence is sincere, I do not despair that my transgressions may be forgiven."

"Mighty fine!" ejaculated Mrs. Wood, contemptuously.

"You cannot understand me, madam ; and it is well you cannot. Blessed with a fond husband, surrounded by every comfort, *you* have never been assailed by the horrible temptations to which misery has exposed *me*. You have never known what it is to want food, raiment, shelter. You have never seen the child within your arms perishing from hunger, and no relief to be obtained. You have never felt the hearts of all hardened against you ; have never heard the jeer or curse from every lip ; nor endured the insult and the blow from every hand. I *have* suffered all this. I could resist the tempter *now*. I am strong in health—in mind. But *then*——Oh! madam, there are moments—moments of darkness, which overshadow a whole existence—in the lives of the poor houseless wretches who traverse the streets, when reason is well-nigh benighted ; when the horrible promptings of despair can alone be listened to ; and when vice itself assumes the aspect of virtue. Pardon what I have said, madam. I do not desire to extenuate my guilt—far less to defend it ; but I would show you, and such as you—who, happily, are exempted from trials like mine—how much misery has to do with crime. And I affirm to you, on my own conviction, that she who falls because she has not strength granted her to struggle with affliction, *may* be reclaimed—may repent, and be forgiven,—even as she whose sins, 'though many, were forgiven her.'"

"It gladdens me to hear you talk thus, Joan," said Wood in a voice of much emotion, while his eyes filled

with tears, "and more than repays me for all I have done for you."

"If professions of repentance constitute a Magdalene, Mrs. Sheppard is one, no doubt," observed Mrs. Wood, ironically; "but I used to think it required something more than *mere words* to prove that a person's character was abused."

"Very right, my love," said Wood, "very sensibly remarked. So it does. But I can speak to that point. Mrs. Sheppard's conduct, from my own personal knowledge, has been unexceptionable for the last twelve years. During that period she has been a model of propriety."

"Oh! of course," rejoined Mrs. Wood; "I can't for an instant question such disinterested testimony. Mrs. Sheppard, I'm sure, will say as much for you. He's a model of conjugal attachment and fidelity, a pattern to his family, and an example to his neighbors. Ain't he, madam?"

"He is, indeed," replied the widow, fervently; "more —much more than that."

"He's no such thing!" cried Mrs. Wood, furiously. "He's a base, deceitful, tyrannical, hoary-headed libertine—that's what he is. But, I'll expose him. I'll proclaim his misdoings to the world; and then we shall see where he'll stand. Marry, come up! I'll show him what an injured wife can do. If all wives were of my mind and my spirit, husbands would soon be taught their own insignificance. But a time *will* come (and that before long) when our sex will assert its superiority; and, when we have got the upper hand, let 'em try to subdue us if they can. But don't suppose, madam, that anything I say has reference to you. I'm speaking of virtuous women—of WIVES, madam. Mistresses neither deserve consideration nor commiseration."

"I expect no commiseration," returned Mrs. Sheppard,

gently, "nor do I need any. But, rather than be the cause of any further misunderstanding between you and my benefactor, I will leave London and its neighborhood forever."

"Pray do so, madam," retorted Mrs. Wood, "and take your son with you."

"My son!" echoed the widow, trembling.

"Yes, your son, madam. If you can do any good with him, it's more than we can. The house will be well rid of him, for a more idle, good-for-nothing reprobate never crossed its threshold."

"Is this true, sir?" cried Mrs. Sheppard, with an agonized look at Wood. "I know you'll not deceive me. Is Jack what Mrs. Wood represents him?"

"He's not exactly what I could desire him to be, Joan," replied the carpenter, reluctantly. "But a ragged colt sometimes makes the best horse. He'll mend, I hope."

"Never," said Mrs. Wood—"he'll never mend. He has taken more than one step towards the gallows already. Thieves and pickpockets are his constant companions."

"Thieves!" exclaimed Mrs. Sheppard, horror-stricken.

"Jonathan Wild and Blueskin have got him into their hands," continued Mrs. Wood.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the widow, wildly.

"If you doubt my word, woman," replied the carpenter's wife, coldly, "ask Mr. Wood."

"I know you'll contradict it, sir," said the widow, looking at Wood as if she dreaded to have her fears confirmed —"I know you will."

"I wish I could, Joan," returned the carpenter, sadly.

Mrs. Sheppard let fall her basket.

"My son," she murmured, wringing her hands piteously —"my son the companion of thieves! My son in Jonathan Wild's power! It cannot be."

"Why not?" rejoined Mrs. Wood in a taunting tone.

"Your son's father was a thief; and Jonathan Wild (unless I'm misinformed) was his friend—so it's not unnatural he should show some partiality towards Jack."

"Jonathan Wild was my husband's bitterest enemy," said Mrs. Sheppard. "He first seduced him from the paths of honesty, and then betrayed him to a shameful death, and he has sworn to do the same thing by my son. Oh, heavens; that I should have ever indulged a hope of happiness while that terrible man lives!"

"Compose yourself, Joan," said Wood; "all will yet be well."

"Oh, no—no!" replied Mrs. Sheppard, distractedly. "All cannot be well, if this is true. Tell me, sir," she added with forced calmness, and grasping Wood's arm, "what has Jack done? Tell me in a word, that I may know the worst. I can bear anything but suspense."

"You're agitating yourself unnecessarily, Joan," returned Wood, in a soothing voice. "Jack has been keeping bad company. That's the only fault I know of."

"Thank God for that!" ejaculated Mrs. Sheppard, fervently. "Then it is not too late to save him. Where is he, sir? Can I see him?"

"No, that you can't," answered Mrs. Wood; "he has gone out without leave, and has taken Thames Darrell with him. If I were Mr. Wood, when he *does* return, I'd send him about his business. I wouldn't keep an apprentice to set my authority at defiance."

Mr. Wood's reply, if he intended any, was cut short by a loud knocking at the door.

"'Odd's-my-life!—what's that?" he cried, greatly alarmed.

"It's Jonathan Wild come back, with a troop of constables at his heels, to search the house," rejoined Mrs. Wood in equal trepidation. "We shall all be murdered. Oh! that Mr. Kneebone were here to protect me!"

"If it *is* Jonathan," rejoined Wood, "it is very well for Mr. Kneebone he's not here. He'd have enough to do to protect himself, without attending to you. I declare I'm almost afraid to go to the door. Something, I'm convinced, has happened to the boys."

"Has Jonathan Wild been here to-day?" asked Mrs. Sheppard, anxiously.

"To be sure he has!" returned Mrs. Wood; "and Blueskin, too. They're only just gone. Mercy on us—what a clatter!" she added, as the knocking was repeated more violently than before.

While the carpenter irresolutely quitted the room, with a strong presentiment of ill upon his mind, a light quick step was heard descending the stairs, and, before he could call out to prevent it, a man was admitted into the passage.

"Is this Misther Wudd's, my pretty miss!" demanded the rough voice of the Irish watchman.

"It is," replied Winifred; "have you brought any tidings of Thames Darrell?"

"Troth have I!" replied Terence; "but, bless your angilic face, how did you contrive to guess that?"

"Is he well?—is he safe?—is he coming back?" cried the little girl, disregarding the question.

"He's in St. Giles's roundhouse," answered Terence; "but tell Mr. Wudd I'm here, and have brought him a message from his unlawful son; and don't be detainin' me, my darlin', for there's not a minute to lose if the poor lad's to be rescued from the clutches of that thief and thieftaker o' the wurld, Jonathan Wild."

The carpenter, upon whom no part of this hurried dialogue had been lost, now made his appearance, and having obtained from Terence all the information which that personage could impart respecting the perilous situation of Thames, he declared himself ready to start to Saint

Giles's at once, and ran back to the room for his hat and stick; expressing his firm determination, as he pocketed his constable's staff, with which he thought it expedient to arm himself, of being direfully revenged upon the thieftaker: a determination in which he was strongly encouraged by his wife. Terence, meanwhile, who had followed him, did not remain silent, but recapitulated his story for the benefit of Mrs. Sheppard. The poor widow was thrown into an agony of distress on learning that a robbery had been committed, in which her son (for she could not doubt that Jack was one of the boys) was implicated; nor was her anxiety alleviated by Mrs. Wood, who maintained stoutly, that if Thames had been led to do wrong, it must be through the instrumentality of his worthless companion.

"And there you're right, you may dipind, marm," observed Terence. "Master Thames Ditt—what's his blessed name?—has honesty written in his handsome phiz; but as to his companion, Jack Sheppard I think you call him, he's a born and bred thief. Lord bless you, marm! we sees plenty on 'em in our purfession. Them young prigs is all alike. I seed he was one—and a sharp un, too—at a glance."

"Oh!" exclaimed the widow, covering her face with her hands.

"Take a drop of brandy before we start, watchman," said Wood, pouring out a glass of spirit, and presenting it to Terence, who smacked his lips as he disposed of it. "Won't you be persuaded, Joan?" he added, making a similar offer to Mrs. Sheppard, which she gratefully declined. "If you mean to accompany us, you may need it."

"You are very kind, sir," returned the widow, "but I require no support. Nothing stronger than water has passed my lips for years."

"We may believe as much of that as we please, I suppose," observed the carpenter's wife with a sneer. "Mr. Wood," she continued in an authoritative tone, seeing her husband ready to depart, "one word before you set out. If Jack Sheppard or his mother ever enter this house again, I leave it—that's all. Now, do what you please. You know *my* fixed determination."

Mr. Wood made no reply; but, hastily kissing his weeping daughter, and bidding her be of good cheer, hurried off. He was followed with equal celerity by Terence and the widow. Traversing what remained of Wych Street at a rapid pace, and speeding along Drury Lane, the trio soon found themselves in Kendrick Yard. When they came to the roundhouse, Terry's courage failed him. Such was the terror inspired by Wild's vindictive character, that few durst face him who had given him cause for displeasure. Aware that he should incur the thieftaker's bitterest animosity by what he had done, the watchman, whose wrath against Quilt Arnold had evaporated during the walk, thought it more prudent not to hazard a meeting with his master till the storm had, in some measure, blown over. Accordingly, having given Wood such directions as he thought necessary for his guidance, and received a handsome gratuity in return for his services, he departed.

It was not without considerable demur and delay on the part of Sharples, that the carpenter and his companion could gain admittance to the roundhouse. Reconnoitering them through a small grated loophole, he refused to open the door till they had explained their business. This, Wood, acting upon Terry's caution, was most unwilling to do; but, finding he had no alternative, he reluctantly made known his errand, and the bolts were undrawn. Once in, the constable's manner appeared totally changed. He was now as civil as he had just been insolent. Apol-

ogizing for their detention, he answered the questions put to him respecting the boys, by positively denying that any such prisoners had been intrusted to his charge, but offered to conduct him to every cell in the building to prove the truth of his assertion. He then barred and double-locked the door, took out the key (a precautionary measure which, with a grim smile, he said he never omitted), thrust it into his vest, and, motioning the couple to follow him, led the way to the inner room. As Wood obeyed, his foot slipped; and, casting his eyes upon the floor, he perceived it splashed in several places with blood. From the freshness of the stains, which grew more frequent as they approached the adjoining chamber, it was evident some violence had been recently perpetrated, and the carpenter's own blood froze within his veins as he thought, with a thrill of horror, that perhaps on this very spot, not many minutes before his arrival, his adopted son might have been inhumanly butchered. Nor was this impression removed as he stole a glance at Mrs. Sheppard, and saw from her terrified look that she had made the same alarming discovery as himself. But it was now too late to turn back, and, nerving himself for the shock he expected to encounter, he ventured after his conductor. No sooner had they entered the room than Sharples, who waited to usher them in, hastily retreated, closed the door, and turning the key, laughed loudly at the success of his stratagem. Vexation at his folly in suffering himself to be thus entrapped, kept Wood for a short time silent. When he could find words, he tried by the most urgent solicitations to prevail upon the constable to let him out. But threats and entreaties—even promises, were ineffectual; and the unlucky captive after exhausting his powers of persuasion, was compelled to give up the point.

The room in which he was detained—that lately

occupied by the Mohocks, who, it appeared, had been allowed to depart—was calculated to inspire additional apprehension and disgust. Strongly impregnated with the mingled odors of tobacco, ale, brandy, and other liquors, the atmosphere was almost stifling. The benches running round the room, though fastened to the walls by iron clamps, had been forcibly wrenched off; while the table, which was similarly secured to the boards, was upset and its contents—bottles, jugs, glasses, and bowls, were broken and scattered about in all directions. Everything proclaimed the mischievous propensities of the recent occupants of the chamber.

Here lay a heap of knockers of all sizes, from the huge lion's head to the small brass rapper: there, a collection of signboards, with the names and calling of the owners utterly obliterated. On this side stood the instruments with which the latter piece of pleasantry had been effected—namely, a bucket filled with paint and a brush: on that was erected a trophy, consisting of a watchman's rattle, a laced hat with the crown knocked out, and its place supplied by a lantern, a campaign wig saturated with punch, a torn steenkirk and ruffles, some half-dozen staves, and a broken sword.

As the carpenter's gaze wandered over this scene of devastation, his attention was drawn by Mrs. Sheppard towards an appalling object in one corner. This was the body of a man, apparently lifeless, and stretched upon a mattress, with his head bound up in a linen cloth, through which the blood had oozed. Near the body, which, it will be surmised, was that of Abraham Mendez, two ruffianly personages were seated, quietly smoking, and bestowing no sort of attention upon the newcomers. Their conversation was conducted in the flash language, and, though unintelligible to Wood, was easily comprehended by his companion, who learnt, to her dismay, that

the wounded man had received his hurt from her son, whose courage and dexterity formed the present subject of their discourse. From other obscure hints dropped by the speakers, Mrs. Sheppard ascertained that Thames Darrell had been carried off—where she could not make out—by Jonathan Wild and Quilt Arnold; and that Jack had been induced to accompany Blueskin to the Mint. This intelligence, which she instantly communicated to the carpenter, drove him almost frantic. He renewed his supplications to Sharples, but with no better success than heretofore; and the greater part of the night was passed by him and the poor widow, whose anxiety, if possible, exceeded his own, in the most miserable state imaginable.

At length, about three o'clock, as the first glimmer of dawn became visible through the barred casements of the roundhouse, the rattling of bolts and chains at the outer door told that some one was admitted. Whoever this might be, the visit seemed to have some reference to the carpenter, for, shortly afterwards, Sharples made his appearance, and informed the captives they were free. Without waiting to have the information repeated, Wood rushed forth, determined, as soon as he could procure assistance, to proceed to Jonathan Wild's house in the Old Bailey; while Mrs. Sheppard, whose maternal fears drew her in another direction, hurried off to the Mint.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FLASH KEN.

In an incredibly short space of time—for her anxiety lent wings to her feet—Mrs. Sheppard reached the debtors' garrison. From a scout stationed at the northern entrance, whom she addressed in the jargon of the place, with which long usage had formerly rendered her familiar, she ascertained that Blueskin, accompanied by a youth, whom she knew by the description must be her son, had arrived there about three hours before, and had proceeded to the Cross Shovels. This was enough for the poor widow. She felt she was now near her boy, and, nothing doubting her ability to rescue him from his perilous situation, she breathed a fervent prayer for his deliverance; and, bending her steps towards the tavern in question, revolved within her mind, as she walked along, the best means of accomplishing her purpose. Aware of the cunning and desperate characters of the persons with whom she would have to deal—aware, also, that she was in a quarter where no laws could be appealed to, nor assistance obtained, she felt the absolute necessity of caution. Accordingly, when she arrived at the Shovels, with which, as an old haunt in her bygone days of wretchedness, she was well acquainted, instead of entering the principal apartment, which she saw at a glance was crowded with company of both sexes, she turned into a small room on the left of the bar, and, as an excuse for so doing, called for something to drink. The drawers at the moment were too busy to attend to her, and she would have seized the opportunity of examining, unper-

ceived, the assemblage within, through a little curtained window that overlooked the adjoining chamber, if an impediment had not existed in the shape of Baptist Kettleby, whose portly person entirely obscured the view. The Master of the Mint, in the exercise of his twofold office of governor and publican, was mounted upon a chair, and holding forth to his guests in a speech, to which Mrs. Sheppard was unwillingly compelled to listen.

"Gentlemen of the Mint," said the orator, "when I was first called, some fifty years ago, to the important office I hold, there existed across the water three places of refuge for the oppressed and persecuted debtor."

"We know it," cried several voices.

"It happened, gentlemen," pursued the Master, "on a particular occasion, about the time I've mentioned, that the Archduke of Alsatia, the Sovereign of the Savoy, and the Satrap of Salisbury Court, met by accident at the Cross Shovels. A jolly night we made of it, as you may suppose; for four such monarchs don't often come together. Well, while we were smoking our pipes, and quaffing our punch, Alsatia turns to me and says, 'Mint,' says he, 'you're well off here.'—'Pretty well,' says I; 'you're not badly off at the Friars for that matter.'—'Oh! yes, we are,' says he.—'How so?' says I.—'It's all up with us,' says he; 'they've taken away our charter.'—'They can't,' says I.—'They have,' says he.—'They can't, I tell you,' says I, in a bit of a passion: 'it's unconstitutional.'—'Unconstitutional or not,' says Salisbury Court and Savoy, speaking together, 'it's true. We shall become a prey to the Philistines, and must turn honest in self-defense.'—'No fear o' that,' thought I.—'I see how it'll be,' observed Alsatia, 'everybody 'll pay his debts, and only think of such a state of things as that.'—'It's *not* to be thought of,' says I, thumping the table till every glass on it jingled; 'and I know a way as 'll prevent it.—'What is

it, Mint?' asked all three.—'Why, hang every bailiff that sets a foot in your territories, and you're safe,' says I.—'We'll do it,' said they, filling their glasses, and looking as fierce as King George's grenadier guards; 'here's your health, Mint.' But, gentlemen, though they talked so largely, and looked so fiercely, they did *not* do it; they did *not* hang the bailiffs; and where are they?"

"Ay, where are they?" echoed the company, with indignant derision.

"Gentlemen," returned the Master, solemnly, "it is a question easily answered—they are NOWHERE! Had they hanged the bailiffs, the bailiffs would not have hanged them. We ourselves have been similarly circumstanced. Attacked by an infamous and unconstitutional statute, passed in the reign of the late usurper, William of Orange (for I may remark, that if the right king had been upon the throne, that illegal enactment would never have received the royal assent—the Stuarts—Heaven preserve 'em!—always siding with the debtors); attacked in this outrageous manner, I repeat, it has been all but '*up*' with US! But the vigorous resistance offered on that memorable occasion by the patriotic inhabitants of Bermuda to the aggressions of arbitrary power, secured and established their privileges on a firmer basis than heretofore; and while their pusillanimous allies were crushed and annihilated, they became more prosperous than ever. Gentlemen, I am proud to say that *I* originated—that *I* directed those measures. I hope to see the day, when not Southwark alone, but London itself, shall become one Mint—when all men shall be debtors, and none creditors—when imprisonment for debt shall be utterly abolished—when highway robbery shall be accounted a pleasant pastime, and forgery an accomplishment—when Tyburn and its gibbets shall be overthrown—capital punishments discontinued—Newgate, Ludgate, the Gatehouse, and the

Compters, razed to the ground—Bridewell and Clerkenwell destroyed—the Fleet, the King's Bench, and the Marshalsea, remembered only by name! But, in the meantime, as that day may possibly be farther off than I anticipate, we are bound to make the most of the present. Take care of yourselves, gentlemen, and your governor will take care of you. Before I sit down I have a toast to propose, which I am sure will be received, as it deserves to be, with enthusiasm. It is the health of a stranger—of Mr. John Sheppard. His father was one of my old customers, and I am happy to find his son treading in his steps. He couldn't be in better hands than those in which he has placed himself. Gentlemen—Mr. Sheppard's good health, and success to him!"

Baptist's toast was received with loud applause, and, as he sat down amid the cheers of the company, and a universal clatter of mugs and glasses, the widow's view was no longer obstructed. Her eye wandered quickly over that riotous and disorderly assemblage, until it settled upon one group more riotous and disorderly than the rest, of which her son formed the principal figure. The agonized mother could scarcely repress a scream at the spectacle that met her gaze. There sat Jack, evidently in the last stage of intoxication, with his collar opened, his dress disarranged, a pipe in his mouth, a bowl of punch and a half-emptied rummer before him—there he sat, receiving and returning, or rather attempting to return—for he was almost past consciousness—the blandishments of a couple of females, one of whom had passed her arm round his neck, while the other leaned over the back of his chair, and appeared from her gestures to be whispering soft nonsense into his ear.

Both these ladies possessed considerable personal attractions. The younger of the two, who was seated next to Jack, and seemed to monopolize his attention, could

not be more than seventeen, though her person had all the maturity of twenty. She had delicate oval features, light, laughing blue eyes, a pretty *nez retroussé*, (why have we not the term, since we have the best specimens of the feature?) teeth of pearly whiteness, and a brilliant complexion, set off by rich auburn hair, a very white neck and shoulders—the latter, perhaps, a trifle too much exposed. The name of this damsel was Edgeworth Bess; and as her fascinations will not, perhaps, be found to be without some influence upon the future fortunes of her boyish admirer, we have thought it worth while to be thus particular in describing them. The other *bona roba*, known among her companions as Mistress Poll Maggot, was a beauty on a much larger scale—in fact, a perfect Amazon. Nevertheless, though nearly six feet high, and correspondingly proportioned, she was a model of symmetry, and boasted, with the frame of a Thalestris or a Trulla, the regular lineaments of the Medicean Venus. A man's laced hat—whether adopted from the caprice of the moment, or habitually worn, we are unable to state—cocked knowingly on her head, harmonized with her masculine appearance. Mrs. Maggot, as well as her companion Edgeworth Bess, was showily dressed; nor did either of them disdain the aid supposed to be lent to a fair skin by the contents of the patchbox. On an empty cask, which served him for a chair, and opposite Jack Sheppard, whose rapid progress in depravity afforded him the highest satisfaction, sat Blueskin, encouraging the two women in their odious task, and plying his victim with the glass as often as he deemed it expedient to do so. By this time, he had apparently accomplished all he desired; for moving the bottle out of Jack's reach, he appropriated it entirely to his own use, leaving the devoted lad to the care of the females. Some few of the individuals seated at the other tables seemed to take an interest in the proceedings of

Blueskin and his party, just as a bystander watches any other game; but, generally speaking, the company were too much occupied with their own concerns to pay attention to anything else. The assemblage was for the most part, if not altogether, composed of persons to whom vice in all its aspects was too familiar to present much of a novelty, in whatever form it was exhibited. Nor was Jack by any means the only stripling in the room. Not far from him was a knot of lads, drinking, swearing, and playing at dice as eagerly and as skilfully as any of the older hands. Near to these hopeful youths sat a fence, or receiver, bargaining with a clouter, or pickpocket, for a *suit*—or, to speak in more intelligible language, a watch and seals, two *cloaks*, commonly called watch-cases, and a *wedge-lobb*, otherwise known as a silver snuff-box. Next to the receiver was a gang of housebreakers, laughing over their exploits, and planning fresh depredations; and next to the housebreakers came two gallant-looking gentlemen in long periwigs and riding-dresses, and equipped in all other respects for the road, with a roast fowl and a bottle of wine before them. Amid this varied throng—varied in appearance, but alike in character—one object alone, we have said, riveted Mrs. Sheppard's attention; and no sooner did she in some degree recover from the shock occasioned by the sight of her son's debased condition, than, regardless of any other consideration except his instant removal from the contaminating society by which he was surrounded, and utterly forgetting the more cautious plan she meant to have adopted, she rushed into the room, and summoned him to follow her.

"Halloa!" cried Jack, looking round, and trying to fix his inebriate gaze upon the speaker—"who's that?"

"Your mother," replied Mrs. Sheppard. "Come home directly, sir."

"Mother be——!" returned Jack. "Who is it, Bess?"

"How should I know?" replied Edgeworth Bess. "But if it *is* your mother, send her about her business."

"That I will," replied Jack, "in the twinkling of a bed-post."

"Glad to see you once more in the Mint, Mrs. Sheppard," roared Blueskin, who anticipated some fun. "Come and sit down by me."

"Take a glass of gin, ma'am," cried Poll Maggot, holding up a bottle of spirit; "it used to be your favorite liquor, I've heard."

"Jack, my love," cried Mrs. Sheppard, disregarding the taunt, "come away."

"Not I," replied Jack; "I'm too comfortable where I am. Be off!"

"Jack!" exclaimed his unhappy parent.

"Mr. Sheppard, if you please, ma'am," interrupted the lad; "I allow nobody to call me Jack. Do I, Bess, eh?"

"Nobody whatever, love," replied Edgeworth Bess; "nobody but me, dear."

"And me," insinuated Mrs. Maggot. "My little fancy man's quite as fond of me as of you, Bess. Ain't you, Jacky darling?"

"Not quite, Poll," returned Mr. Sheppard; "but I love you next to her, and both of you better than *her*," pointing with the pipe to his mother.

"Oh, heavens!" cried Mrs. Sheppard.

"Bravo!" shouted Blueskin. "Tom Sheppard never said a better thing than that—ho! ho!"

"Jack," cried his mother, wringing her hands in distraction, "you'll break my heart!"

"Poh! Poh!" returned her son; "women don't so easily break their hearts. Do they, Bess?"

"Certainly not," replied the young lady appealed to, "especially about their sons."

"Wretch!" cried Mrs. Sheppard, bitterly.

"I say," retorted Edgeworth Bess, with a very unfeminine imprecation, "I sha'n't stand any more of that nonsense. What do you mean by calling me wretch, madam?" she added, marching up to Mrs. Sheppard, and regarding her with an insolent and threatening glance.

"Yes—what do you mean, ma'am?" added Jack, staggering after her.

"Come with me, my love, come—come," cried his mother, seizing his hand, and endeavoring to force him away.

"He sha'n't go," cried Edgeworth Bess, holding him by the other hand. "Here, Poll, help me!"

Thus exhorted, Mrs. Maggot lent her powerful aid, and between the two, Jack was speedily relieved from all fears of being carried off against his will. Not content with this exhibition of her prowess, the Amazon lifted him up as easily as if he had been an infant, and placed him upon her shoulders, to the infinite delight of the company, and the increased distress of his mother.

"Now, let's see who'll dare to take him down," she cried.

"Nobody shall," cried Mr. Sheppard from his elevated position. "I'm my own master now, and I'll do as I please. I'll turn cracksman, like my father—rob old Wood—he has chests full of money, and I know where they're kept—I'll rob him, and give the swag to you, Poll—I'll——"

Jack would have said more; but, losing his balance, he fell to the ground, and, when taken up, he was perfectly insensible. In this state, he was laid upon a bench, to sleep off his drunken fit, while his wretched mother, in spite of her passionate supplications and resistance, was, by Blueskin's command, forcibly ejected from the house, and driven out of the Mint.

JACK SHEPPARD GETS DRUNK AND ORDERS HIS MOTHER OFF

CHAPTER XV.

THE ROBBERY IN WILLESDEN CHURCH.

During the whole of the next day and night, the poor widow hovered like a ghost about the precincts of the debtors' garrison,—for admission (by the Master's express orders) was denied her. She could learn nothing of her son, and only obtained one solitary piece of information, which added to, rather than alleviated her misery—namely, that Jonathan Wild had paid a secret visit to the Cross Shovels. At one time, she determined to go to Wych Street, and ask Mr. Wood's advice and assistance; but the thought of the reception she was likely to meet with from his wife deterred her from executing this resolution. Many other expedients occurred to her; but, after making several ineffectual attempts to get into the Mint unobserved, they were all abandoned.

At length, about an hour before dawn on the second day—Sunday—having spent the early part of the night in watching at the gates of the robber's sanctuary, and being almost exhausted from want of rest, she set out homewards. It was a long walk she had to undertake, even if she had endured no previous fatigue; but, feeble as she was, it was almost more than she could accomplish. Daybreak found her winding her painful way along the Harrow Road; and, in order to shorten the distance as much as possible, she took the nearest cut, and struck into the meadows on the right. Crossing several fields, newly mown, or filled with lines of tedded hay, she arrived, not without great exertion, at the summit of a hill. Here her strength completely failed her, and she was compelled to seek some repose. Making her couch

upon a heap of hay, she sank at once into a deep and refreshing slumber.

When she awoke, the sun was high in heaven. It was a bright and beautiful day; *so* bright, *so* beautiful, that even her sad heart was cheered by it. The air, perfumed with the delicious fragrance of the new-mown grass, was vocal with the melodies of the birds; the thick foliage of the trees was glistening in the sunshine; all nature seemed happy and rejoicing; but, above all, the serene Sabbath stillness reigning around, communicated a calm to her wounded spirit.

What a contrast did the lovely scene she now gazed upon present to the squalid neighborhood she had recently quitted! On all sides, expanded prospects of country the most exquisite and most varied. Immediately beneath her lay Willesden—the most charming and secluded village in the neighborhood of the metropolis—with its scattered farm-houses, its noble granges, and its old gray church tower just peeping above a groove of rook-haunted trees.

Towards this spot Mrs. Sheppard now directed her steps. She speedily reached her own abode—a little cottage, standing in the outskirts of the village. The first circumstance that struck her on her arrival seemed ominous. Her clock had stopped—stopped at the very hour on which she had quitted the Mint! She had not the heart to wind it up again.

After partaking of some little refreshment, and changing her attire, Mrs. Sheppard prepared for church. By this time, she had so far succeeded in calming herself, that she answered the greetings of the neighbors whom she encountered on her way to the sacred edifice—if sorrowfully, still composedly.

Every old country church is beautiful, but Willesden is the most beautiful country church we know; and in Mrs. Sheppard's time it was even more beautiful than at

present, when the hand of improvement has proceeded a little too rashly with alterations and repairs. With one or two exceptions, there were no pews; and, as the intercourse with London was then but slight, the seats were occupied almost exclusively by the villagers. In one of these seats, at the end of the aisle farthest removed from the chancel, the widow took her place, and addressed herself fervently to her devotions.

The service had not proceeded far, when she was greatly disturbed by the entrance of a person who placed himself opposite her, and sought to attract her attention by a number of little arts, surveying her, as he did so, with a very impudent and offensive stare. With this person—who was no other than Mr. Kneebone—she was too well acquainted; having, more than once, been obliged to repel his advances; and, though his impertinence would have given her little concern at another season, it now added considerably to her distraction. But a far greater affliction was in store for her.

Just as the clergyman approached the altar, she perceived a boy steal quickly into the church, and ensconce himself behind the woolen-draper, who, in order to carry on his amatory pursuits with greater convenience, and at the same time display his figure (of which he was not a little vain) to the utmost advantage, preferred a standing to a sitting posture. Of this boy she had only caught a glimpse;—but that glimpse was sufficient to satisfy her it was her son—and, if she could have questioned her own instinctive love, she could not question her antipathy, when she beheld, partly concealed by a pillar immediately in the rear of the woolen-draper, the dark figure and truculent features of Jonathan Wild. As she looked in this direction, the thief-taker raised his eyes—those gray, bloodthirsty eyes!—their glare froze the lifeblood in her veins.

As she averted her gaze, a terrible idea crossed her. Why was he there? why did the tempter dare to invade that sacred spot? She could not answer her own questions, but vague fearful suspicions passed through her mind. Meanwhile, the service proceeded; and the awful command, "*Thou shalt not steal!*" was solemnly uttered by the preacher, when Mrs. Sheppard, who had again looked round towards her son, beheld a hand glance along the side of the woolen-draper. She could not see what occurred, though she guessed it; but she saw Jonathan's devilish triumphing glance, and read in it—"Your son has committed a robbery—here—in these holy walls—he is mine—mine forever!"

She uttered a loud scream and fainted.

CHAPTER XVI.

JONATHAN WILD'S HOUSE IN THE OLD BAILEY.

Just as St. Sepulcher's church struck one, on the eventful night of the 10th of June (to which it will not be necessary to recur), a horseman, mounted on a powerful charger, and followed at a respectful distance by an attendant, galloped into the open space fronting Newgate, and directed his course towards a house in the Old Bailey. Before he could draw in the rein, his steed—startled apparently by some object undistinguishable by the rider, —swerved with such suddenness as to unseat him, and precipitate him on the ground. The next moment, however, he was picked up, and set upon his feet by a person who, having witnessed the accident, flew across the road to his assistance.

"You're not hurt, I hope, Sir Rowland?" inquired this individual.

"Not materially, Mr. Wild," replied the other, "a little shaken, that's all. Curses light on the horse!" he added, seizing the bridle of his steed, who continued snorting and shivering, as if still under the influence of some unaccountable alarm; "what can ail him?"

"*I* know what ails him, your honor," rejoined the groom, riding up as he spoke; "he's seen somethin' not o' this world."

"Most likely," observed Jonathan, with a slight sneer; "the ghost of some highwayman who has just breathed his last in Newgate, no doubt."

"May be," returned the man gravely.

"Take him home, Saunders," said Sir Rowland, resign-

ing his faulty steed to the attendant's care, "I shall not require you further. Strange!" he added, as the groom departed; "Bay Stuart has carried me through a hundred dangers, but never played me such a trick before."

"And never should again, were he mine," rejoined Jonathan. "If the best nag ever foaled were to throw me in this unlucky spot, I'd blow his brains out."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Trenchard.

"A fall against Newgate is accounted a sign of death by the halter," replied Wild, with ill-disguised malignity.

"Tush!" exclaimed Sir Rowland, angrily.

"From that door," continued the thief-taker, pointing to the gloomy portal of the prison opposite which they were standing, "the condemned are taken to Tyburn. It's a bad omen to be thrown near that door."

"I didn't suspect you of so much superstition, Mr. Wild," observed the knight, contemptuously.

"Facts convince the most incredulous," answered Jonathan, drily. "I've known several cases where the ignominious doom I've mentioned has been foretold by such an accident as has just befallen you. There was Major Price—you must recollect him, Sir Rowland—he stumbled as he was getting out of his chair at that very gate. Well, *he* was executed for murder. Then there was Tom Jarrot, the hackney-coachman, who was pitched off the box against yonder curbstone, and broke his leg. It was a pity he didn't break his neck, for he was hanged within the year. Another instance was that of Toby Tanner—"

"No more of this," interrupted Trenchard; "where is the boy?"

"Not far hence," replied Wild. "After all our pains we were near losing him, Sir Rowland."

"How so?" asked the other, distrustfully.

"You shall hear," returned Jonathan. "With the help

of his comrade, Jack Sheppard, the young rascal made a bold push to get out of the roundhouse, where my janizaries had lodged him, and would have succeeded too, if, by good-luck—for the devil never deserts so useful an agent as I am, Sir Rowland—I hadn't arrived in time to prevent him. As it was, my oldest and trustiest setter, Abraham Mendez, received a blow on the head from one of the lads that will deprive me of his services for a week to come—if, indeed, it does not disable him altogether. However, if I've lost one servant, I've gained another, that's one comfort. Jack Sheppard is now wholly in my hands."

"What is this to me, sir?" said Trenchard, cutting him short.

"Nothing whatever," rejoined the thief-taker, coldly. "But it is much to me. Jack Sheppard is to me what Thames Darrell is to you—an object of hatred. I owed his father a grudge: that I settled long ago. I owe his mother one, and will repay the debt, with interest, to her son. I could make away with him at once, as you are about to make away with your nephew, Sir Rowland—but that wouldn't serve my turn. To be complete, my vengeance must be tardy. Certain of my prey, I can afford to wait for it. Besides, revenge is sweetened by delay; and I indulge too freely in the passion to rob it of any of its zest. I've watched this lad—this Sheppard—from infancy; and, though I have apparently concerned myself little about him, I have never lost sight of my purpose. I have suffered him to be brought up decently—honestly; because I would make his fall the greater, and deepen the wound I meant to inflict upon his mother. From this night I shall pursue a different course; from this night his ruin may be dated. He is in the care of those who will not leave the task assigned to them—the utter perversion of his principles—half-finished. And

when I have steeped him to the lips in vice and depravity; when I have led him to the commission of every crime; when there is neither retreat nor advance for him; when he has plundered his benefactor, and broken the heart of his mother—then—but not till then—I will consign him to the fate to which I consigned his father. This I have sworn to do—this I will do."

"Not unless your skull's bullet-proof," cried a voice at his elbow; and, as the words were uttered, a pistol was snapped at his head, which—fortunately, or unfortunately, as the reader pleases—only burnt the priming. The blaze, however, was sufficient to reveal to the thief-taker the features of his intended assassin. They were those of the Irish watchman.

"Ah! Terry O'Flaherty!" vociferated Jonathan, in a tone that betrayed not the slightest discomposure. "Ah! Terry O'Flaherty!" he cried, shouting after the Irishman, who took to his heels as soon as he found his murderous attempt unsuccessful: "you may run, but you'll not get out of my reach. I'll put a brace of dogs on your track, who'll soon hunt you down. You shall swing for this after next sessions, or my name's not Jonathan Wild. I told you, Sir Rowland," he added, turning to the knight, and chuckling, "the devil never deserts me."

"Conduct me to your dwelling, sir, without further delay," said Trenchard, sternly—"to the boy."

"The boy's not at my house," replied Wild.

"Where is he, then?" demanded the other, hastily.

"At a place we call the Dark House at Queenhithe," answered Jonathan, "a sort of underground tavern or night-cellar, close to the river side, and frequented by the crew of the Dutch skipper, to whose care he's to be committed. You need have no apprehensions about him, Sir Rowland. He's safe enough now. I left him in charge of Quilt Arnold and Rykhart Van Galgebrok—the

skipper I spoke of—with strict orders to shoot him if he made any further attempt at escape; and they're not lads—the latter especially—to be trifled with. I deemed it more prudent to send him to the Dark House than to bring him here, in case of any search after him by his adopted father—the carpenter, Wood. If you choose, you can see him put on board the *Zeeslang* yourself, Sir Rowland. But, perhaps, you'll first accompany me to my dwelling for a moment, that we may arrange our accounts before we start. I've a few necessary directions to leave with my people, to put 'em on their guard against the chance of a surprise. Suffer me to precede you. This way, Sir Rowland."

The thief-taker's residence was a large dismal-looking habitation, separated from the street by a flagged court-yard, and defended from general approach by an iron railing. Even in the daylight it had a somber and suspicious air, and seemed to slink back from the adjoining houses, as if afraid of their society. In the obscurity in which it was now seen, it looked like a prison, and, indeed, it was Jonathan's fancy to make it resemble one as much as possible. The windows were grated, the doors barred; each room had the name as well as the appearance of a cell; and the very porter who stood at the gate, habited like a jailer, with his huge bunch of keys at his girdle, his forbidding countenance and surly demeanor, seemed to be borrowed from Newgate. The clanking of chains, the grating of locks, and the rumbling of bolts must have been music in Jonathan's ears, so much pains did he take to subject himself to such sounds. The scanty furniture of the rooms corresponded with their dungeon-like aspect. The walls were bare, and painted in stone-color; the floors, devoid of carpet; the beds, of hangings; the windows, of blinds; and, excepting in the thief-taker's own audience-chamber, there was not a chair or a table

about the premises; the place of these conveniences being elsewhere supplied by benches, and deal-boards laid across joint-stools. Great stone staircases leading no one knew whither, and long gloomy passages, impressed the occasional visitor with the idea that he was traversing a building of vast extent; and, though this was not the case in reality, the deception was so cleverly contrived that it seldom failed of producing the intended effect. Scarcely any one entered Mr. Wild's dwelling without apprehension, or quitted it without satisfaction. More strange stories were told of it than of any other house in London. The garrets were said to be tenanted by coiners, and artists employed in altering watches and jewelery; the cellars to be used as a magazine for stolen goods. By some it was affirmed that a subterranean communication existed between the thief-taker's abode and Newgate, by means of which he was enabled to maintain a secret correspondence with the imprisoned felons: by others, that an underground passage led to extensive vaults, where such malefactors as he chose to screen from justice might lie concealed till the danger was blown over. Nothing, in short, was too extravagant to be related of it; and Jonathan, who delighted in investing himself and his residence with mystery, encouraged, and perhaps originated, these marvelous tales. However this may be, such was the ill report of the place that few passed along the Old Bailey without bestowing a glance of fearful curiosity at its dingy walls, and wondering what was going on inside them; while fewer still, of those who paused at the door, read, without some internal trepidation, the formidable name—inscribed in large letters on its bright brass-plate—of JONATHAN WILD.

Arrived at his habitation, Jonathan knocked in a peculiar manner at the door, which was instantly opened by the grim-visaged porter just alluded to. No sooner had

Trenchard crossed the threshold than a fierce barking was heard at the farther extremity of the passage, and, the next moment, a couple of mastiffs of the largest size rushed furiously towards him. The knight stood upon his defense, but he would unquestionably have been torn in pieces by the savage hounds, if a shower of oaths, seconded by a vigorous application of kicks and blows from their master, had not driven them growling off. Apologizing to Sir Rowland for this unpleasant reception, and swearing lustily at his servant for occasioning it by leaving the dogs at liberty, Jonathan ordered the man to light them to the audience-room. The command was sullenly obeyed, for the fellow did not appear to relish the rating. Ascending the stairs, and conducting them along a somber gallery, in which Trenchard noticed that every door was painted black and numbered, he stopped at the entrance of a chamber; and, selecting a key from the bunch at his girdle, unlocked it. Following his guide, Sir Rowland found himself in a large and lofty apartment, the extent of which he could not entirely discern until lights were set upon the table. He then looked around him with some curiosity; and, as the thief-taker was occupied in giving directions to his attendant in an undertone, ample leisure was allowed him for investigation. At the first glance, he imagined he must have stumbled upon a museum of rarities, there were so many glass cases, so many open cabinets, ranged against the walls; but the next convinced him that if Jonathan was a virtuoso, his tastes did not run in the ordinary channels. Trenchard was tempted to examine the contents of some of these cases, but a closer inspection made him recoil from them in disgust. In the one he approached was gathered together a vast assortment of weapons, each of which, as appeared from the ticket attached to it, had been used as an instrument of destruction. On this side

was a razor with which a son had murdered his father; the blade notched, the haft crusted with blood: on that, a bar of iron, bent, and partly broken, with which a husband had beaten out his wife's brains. As it is not, however, our intention to furnish a complete catalogue of these curiosities, we shall merely mention that in front of him lay a large and sharp knife, once the property of the public executioner, and used by him to dissever the limbs of those condemned to death for high-treason; together with an immense two-pronged flesh-fork, likewise employed by the same terrible functionary to plunge the quarters of his victims in the caldrons of boiling tar and oil. Every gibbet at Tyburn and Hounslow appeared to have been plundered of its charnel spoil to enrich the adjoining cabinet, so well was it stored with skulls and bones, all purporting to be the relics of highwaymen famous in their day. Halters, each of which had fulfilled its destiny, formed the attraction of the next compartment; while a fourth was occupied by an array of implements of housebreaking almost innumerable, and utterly indescribable. All these interesting objects were carefully arranged, classed, and, as we have said, labeled by the thief-taker.

From this singular collection Trenchard turned to regard its possessor, who was standing at a little distance from him, still engaged in earnest discourse with his attendant, and, as he contemplated his ruthless countenance, on which duplicity and malignity had set their strongest seals, he could not help calling to mind all he had heard of Jonathan's perfidiousness to his employers, and deeply regretting that he had placed himself in the power of so unscrupulous a miscreant.

Jonathan Wild, at this time, was on the high-road to the greatness which he subsequently, and not long afterwards, obtained. He was fast rising to an eminence that

no one of his nefarious profession ever reached before him, nor, is it to be hoped, will ever reach again. He was the Napoleon of knavery, and established an uncontrolled empire over all the practitioners of crime. This was no light conquest; nor was it a government easily maintained. Resolution, severity, subtlety, were required for it; and these were qualities which Jonathan possessed in an extraordinary degree. The danger or difficulty of an exploit never appalled him. What his head conceived his hand executed. Professing to stand between the robber and the robbed, he himself plundered both. He it was who formed the grand design of a robber corporation, of which he should be the sole head and director, with the right of delivering those who concealed their booty, or refused to share it with him, to the gallows. He divided London into districts; appointed a gang to each district; and a leader to each gang, whom he held responsible to himself. The country was partitioned in a similar manner. Those whom he retained about his person, or placed in offices of trust, were for the most part convicted felons, who, having returned from transportation before their term had expired, constituted, in his opinion, the safest agents, inasmuch as they could neither be legal evidence against him, nor withhold any portion of the spoil of which he chose to deprive them. But the crowning glory of Jonathan, that which raised him above all his predecessors in iniquity, and clothed his name with undying notoriety—was to come; when, in the plenitude of his power, he commenced a terrible trade, till then unknown—namely, a traffic in human blood. This he carried on by procuring witnesses to swear away the lives of those persons who had incurred his displeasure, or whom it might be necessary to remove.

No wonder that Trenchard, as he gazed at this fearful being, should have some misgivings cross him.

Apparently Jonathan perceived he was an object of scrutiny; for, hastily dismissing his attendant, he walked towards the knight.

"So, you're admiring my cabinet, Sir Rowland," he remarked, with a sinister smile; "it *is* generally admired; and, sometimes by parties who afterwards contribute to the collection themselves,—ha! ha! This skull," he added, pointing to a fragment of mortality in the case beside them, "once belonged to Tom Sheppard, the father of the lad I spoke of just now. In the next box hangs the rope by which he suffered. When I've placed another skull and another halter beside them, I shall be contented."

"To business, sir!" said the knight, with a look of abhorrence.

"Ay, to business," returned Jonathan, grinning, "the sooner the better."

"Here is the sum you bargained for," rejoined Trenchard, flinging a pocket-book on the table; "count it."

Jonathan's eyes glistened as he told over the notes.

"You've given me more than the amount, Sir Rowland," he said, after he had twice counted them, "or I've missed my reckoning. There's a hundred pounds too much."

"Keep it," said Trenchard, haughtily.

"I'll place it to your account, Sir Rowland," answered the thief-taker, smiling significantly. "And now, shall we proceed to Queenhithe?"

"Stay!" cried the other, taking a chair, "a word with you, Mr. Wild."

"As many as you please, Sir Rowland," replied Jonathan, resuming his seat. "I'm quite at your disposal."

"I have a question to propose to you," said Trenchard, "relating to——" and he hesitated.

"Relating to the father of the boy—Thames Darrell," replied Jonathan. "I guessed what was coming. You

desire to know who he was, Sir Rowland. Well, you *shall* know."

"Without further fee?" inquired the knight.

"Not exactly," answered Jonathan, drily. "A secret is too valuable a commodity to be thrown away. But I said I wouldn't drive a hard bargain with you, and I won't. We are alone, Sir Rowland," he added, snuffing the candles, glancing cautiously around, and lowering his tone, "and what you confide to me shall never transpire—at least to your disadvantage."

"I am at a loss to understand you, sir," said Trenchard.

"I'll make myself intelligible before I've done," rejoined Wild. "I need not remind you, Sir Rowland, that I am aware you are deeply implicated in the Jacobite plot which is now known to be hatching."

"Ha!" ejaculated the other.

"Of course, therefore," pursued Jonathan, "you are acquainted with all the leaders of the proposed insurrection—nay, must be in correspondence with them."

"What right have you to suppose this, sir?" demanded Trenchard, sternly.

"Have a moment's patience, Sir Rowland," returned Wild; "and you shall hear. If you will furnish me with a list of these rebels, and with proofs of their treason, I will not only insure your safety, but will acquaint you with the real name and rank of your sister Aliva's husband, as well as with some particulars which will never otherwise reach your ears, concerning your lost sister, Constance."

"My sister Constance!" echoed the knight; "what of her?"

"You agree to my proposal, then?" said Jonathan.

"Do you take me for as great a villain as yourself, sir?" said the knight, rising.

"I took you for one who wouldn't hesitate to avail

himself of any advantage chance might throw in his way," returned the thief-taker, coldly. "I find I was in error. No matter. A time *may* come—and that ere long—when you will be glad to purchase my secrets, and your own safety, at a dearer price than the heads of your companions."

"Are you ready?" said Trenchard, striding towards the door.

"I am," replied Jonathan, following him; "and so," he added in an undertone, "are your captors."

A moment afterwards, they quitted the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NIGHT-CELLAR.

After a few minutes' rapid walking, during which neither party uttered a word, Jonathan Wild and his companion had passed Saint Paul's, dived down a throughfare on the right, and reached Thames Street.

At the period of this history, the main streets of the metropolis were but imperfectly lighted, while the less frequented avenues were left in total obscurity; but, even at the present time, the maze of courts and alleys into which Wild now plunged, would have perplexed any one, not familiar with their intricacies, to thread them on a dark night. Jonathan, however, was well acquainted with the road. Indeed, it was his boast that he could find his way through any part of London blindfolded; and by this time, it would seem, he had nearly arrived at his destination; for, grasping his companion's arm, he led him along a narrow entry which did not appear to have an outlet, and came to a halt. Cautioning the knight, if he valued his neck, to tread carefully, Jonathan then descended a steep flight of steps; and, having reached the bottom in safety, he pushed open a door, that swung back on its hinges as soon as it had admitted him, and, followed by Trenchard, entered the night-cellar.

The vault in which Sir Rowland found himself, resembled in some measure the cabin of a ship. It was long and narrow, with a ceiling supported by huge uncovered rafters, and so low as scarcely to allow a tall man like himself to stand erect beneath it. Notwithstanding the heat of the season—which was not, however, found

particularly inconvenient in this subterranean region—a large heaped-up fire blazed ruddily in one corner, and lighted up a circle of as villainous countenances as ever flame shone upon.

The guests congregated within the night-cellar were, in fact, little better than thieves; but thieves who confined their depredations almost exclusively to the vessels lying in the pool and docks of the river. They had as many designations as grades. There were game watermen and game lightermen, heavy horsemen and light horsemen, scuffle-hunters and long apron-men, lumpers, journeymen coopers, mud-larks, badgers, and rat-catchers—a race of dangerous vermin, recently, in a great measure, extirpated by the vigilance of the Thames Police, but at this period flourishing in vast numbers. Besides these plunderers, there were others, with whom the disposal of their pillage necessarily brought them into contact, and who seldom failed to attend them during their hours of relaxation and festivity;—to wit, dealers in junk, old rags and marine stores, purchasers of prize-money, crimps, and Jew receivers. The latter formed by far the most knavish-looking and unprepossessing portion of the assemblage. One or two of the tables were occupied by groups of fat, frowsy women, in flat caps, with rings on their thumbs, and baskets by their sides; and no one who had listened for a single moment to their coarse language and violent abuse of each other, would require to be told they were fishwives from Billingsgate.

The present divinity of the cellar was a comely, middle-aged dame, almost as stout and quite as shrill-voiced as the Billingsgate fishwives above mentioned. Mrs. Spurling, for so was she named, had a warm nut-brown complexion, almost as dark as a Creole; and a mustache on her upper lip that would have done no discredit to the oldest dragoon in the King's service. This lady was singularly

lucky in her matrimonial connections. She had been married four times: three of her husbands died of hempen fevers, and the fourth, having been twice condemned, was saved from the noose by Jonathan Wild, who not only managed to bring him off, but to obtain for him the situation of under-turnkey in Newgate.

On the appearance of the thief-taker, Mrs. Spurling was standing near the fire superintending some culinary preparation; but she no sooner perceived him, than hastily quitting her occupation, she elbowed a way for him and the knight through the crowd, and ushered them with much ceremony into an inner room, where they found the objects of their search, Quilt Arnold and Rykhart Van Galgebrok, seated at a small table, quietly smoking. This service rendered, without waiting for any further orders, she withdrew.

Both the janizary and the skipper arose as the others entered the room.

"This is the gentleman," observed Jonathan, introducing Trenchard to the Hollander, "who is about to intrust his young relation to your care."

"De gentleman may rely on my showing his relation all de attention in my power," replied Van Galgebrok, bowing profoundly to the knight; "but if any unforeseen accident—such as a slip overboard—should befall de jonker on de voyage, he mushn't lay de fault entirely on my shoulders—haw! haw!"

"Where is he?" asked Sir Rowland, glancing uneasily around, "I do not see him."

"De jonker; he's here," returned the skipper, pointing significantly downwards. "Bring him out, Quilt."

So saying, he pushed aside the table, and the janizary stooping down, undrew a bolt and opened a trapdoor.

"Come out!" roared Quilt, looking into the aperture. "You're wanted."

But as no answer was returned, he thrust his arm up to the shoulder into the hole, and, with some little difficulty and exertion of strength, drew forth Thames Darrell.

The poor boy, whose hands were pinioned behind him, looked very pale, but neither trembled, nor exhibited any other symptom of alarm.

"Why didn't you come out when I called you, you young dog?" cried Quilt, in a savage tone.

"Because I knew what you wanted me for?" answered Thames, firmly.

"Oh! you did—did you?" said the janizary. "And what do you suppose we mean to do with you, eh?"

"You mean to kill me," replied Thames, "by my cruel uncle's command. Ah! there he stands!" he exclaimed, as his eye fell for the first time upon Sir Rowland. "Where is my mother?" he added, regarding the knight with a searching glance.

"Your mother is dead," interposed Wild, scowling.

"Dead!" echoed the boy. "Oh no—no! You say this to terrify me—to try me. But I will not believe you. Inhuman as he is, he would not kill her. Tell me, sir," he added, advancing towards the knight, "tell me this man has spoken falsely!—Tell me, my mother is alive, and do what you please with me!"

"Tell him so, and have done with him, Sir Rowland," observed Jonathan, coldly.

"Tell me the truth, I implore you," cried Thames. "Is she alive?"

"She is not," replied Trenchard, overcome by conflicting emotions, and unable to endure the boy's agonized look.

"Are you answered?" said Jonathan, with a grin worthy of a demon.

"My mother—my poor mother!" ejaculated Thames,

falling on his knees, and bursting into tears. "Shall I never see that sweet face again—never feel the pressure of those kind hands more—nor listen to that gentle voice! Ah! yes, we shall meet again in heaven, where I shall speedily join you. Now, then," he added more calmly, "I am ready to die. The only mercy you can show me is to kill me."

"Then we won't even show you that mercy," retorted the thief-taker brutally; "so get up, and leave off whimpering. Your time isn't come yet."

"Mr. Wild," said Trenchard, "I shall proceed no further in this business. Set the boy free."

"If I disobey you, Sir Rowland," replied the thief-taker, "you'll thank me for it hereafter. Gag him," he added, pushing Thames rudely toward Quilt Arnold, "and convey him to the boat."

"A word," cried the boy, as the janizary was preparing to obey his master's orders. "What has become of Jack Sheppard?"

"Devil knows!" answered Quilt; "but I believe he's in the hands of Blueskin, so there's no doubt he'll soon be on the highway to Tyburn."

"Poor Jack!" sighed Thames. "You needn't gag me," he added, "I'll not cry out."

"We won't trust you, my youngster," added the janizary. And thrusting a piece of iron into his mouth, he forced him out of the room.

Sir Rowland witnessed these proceedings like one stupefied. He neither attempted to prevent his nephew's departure, nor to follow him.

Jonathan kept his keen eye fixed upon him, as he addressed himself for a moment to the Hollander.

"Is the case of watches on board?" he asked, in an undertone.

"Ja," replied the skipper.

"And the rings?"

"Ja."

"That's well. You must dispose of the goldsmith's note I gave you yesterday, as soon as you arrive at Rotterdam. It'll be advertised to-morrow."

"De duivel!" exclaimed Van Galgebrok. "Very well. It shall be done as you direct. But about that jonker," he continued, lowering his voice; "have you anything to add consarnin' him? It's almosht a pity to put him onder de water."

"Is the sloop ready to sail?" asked Wild, without noticing the skipper's remark.

"Ja," answered Van; "at a minut's nodish."

"Here are your despatches," said Jonathan, with a significant look, and giving him a sealed packet. "Open them when you get on board—not before, and act as they direct you."

"I ondersthand," replied the skipper, putting his finger to his nose; "it shall be done."

"Sir Rowland," said Jonathan, turning to the knight, "will it please you to remain here till I return, or will you accompany us?"

"I will go with you," answered Trenchard, who, by this time, had regained his composure, and with it all his relentlessness of purpose.

"Come, then," said Wild, marching towards the door, "we've no time to lose."

Quitting the night-cellar, the trio soon arrived at the river-side. Quilt Arnold was stationed at the stair-head, near which the boat containing the captive boy was moored. A few words passed between him and the thief-taker as the latter came up; after which, all the party —with the exception of Quilt, who was left on shore— embarked within the wherry, which was pushed from the strand and rowed swiftly along the stream—for the tide

was in its favor—by a couple of watermen. Though scarcely two hours past midnight, it was perfectly light. The moon had arisen, and everything could be as plainly distinguished as during the day. A thin mist lay on the river, giving the few craft moving about in it a ghostly look. As they approached London Bridge, the thief-taker whispered Van Galgebrok, who acted as steersman, to make for a particular arch—near the Surrey shore. The skipper obeyed, and in another moment they swept through the narrow lock. While the watermen were contending with the eddies occasioned by the fall below the bridge, Jonathan observed a perceptible shudder run through Trenchard's frame.

"You remember that starling, Sir Rowland," he said maliciously, "and what occurred on it twelve years ago?"

"Too well," answered the knight, frowning. "Ah! what is that?" he cried, pointing to a dark object floating near them amid the boiling waves, and which presented a frightful resemblance to a human face.

"We'll see," returned the thief-taker. And, stretching out his hand, he lifted the dark object from the flood.

It proved to be a human head, though with scarcely a vestige of the features remaining. Here and there, patches of flesh adhered to the bones, and the dank dripping hair hanging about what once had been the face, gave it a ghastly appearance.

"It's the skull of a *rebel*," said Jonathan, with marked emphasis on the word, "blown by the wind from a spike on the bridge above us. I don't know whose brainless head it may be, but it'll do for my collection." And he tossed it carelessly into the bottom of the boat.

After this occurrence, not a word was exchanged between them until they came in sight of the sloop, which was lying at anchor off Wapping. Arrived at her side, it was soon evident, from the throng of seamen in Dutch

dresses that displayed themselves, that her crew were on the alert, and a rope having been thrown down to the skipper, he speedily hoisted himself on deck. Preparations were next made for taking Thames on board. Raising him in his arms, Jonathan passed the rope round his body, and in this way the poor boy was drawn up without difficulty.

While he was swinging in mid-air, Thames regarded his uncle with a stern look, and cried in a menacing voice, "We shall meet again."

"Not in this world," returned Jonathan. "Weigh anchor, Van!" he shouted to the skipper, "and consult your despatches."

"Ja—ja," returned the Hollander. And, catching hold of Thames, he quitted the deck.

Shortly afterwards, he reappeared with the information that the captive was safe below; and, giving the necessary directions to his crew, before many minutes had elapsed the *Zeeslang* spread her canvass to the first breeze of morning.

By the thief-taker's command, the boat was then rowed toward a muddy inlet, which has received in more recent times the name of Execution Dock. As soon as she reached this spot, Wild sprang ashore, and was joined by several persons—among whom was Quilt Arnold, leading a horse by the bridle—he hastened down the stairs to meet him. A coach was also in attendance, at a little distance.

Sir Rowland, who had continued absorbed in thought, with his eyes fixed upon the sloop as she made her way slowly down the river, disembarked more leisurely.

"At length I am my own master," murmured the knight, as his foot touched the strand.

"Not so, Sir Rowland," returned Jonathan; "you are my prisoner."

"How!" ejaculated Trenchard, starting back, and drawing his sword.

"You are arrested for high treason," rejoined Wild, presenting a pistol at his head, while he drew forth a parchment—"here is my warrant."

"Traitor!" cried Sir Rowland—"damned, double-dyed traitor."

"Away with him," vociferated Jonathan to his myrmidons, who, having surrounded Trenchard, hurried him off to the coach before he could utter another word—"first to Mr. Walpole, and then to Newgate. And now, Quilt," he continued, addressing the janizary, who approached him with the horse, "fly to Saint Giles's roundhouse, and if, through the agency of that treacherous scoundrel, Terry O'Flaherty, whom I've put in my Black List, old Wood should have found his way there, and have been detained by Sharples, as I directed, you may release him. I don't care how soon he learns that he has lost his adopted son. When I've escorted yon proud fool to his new quarters, I'll proceed to the Mint, and look after Jack Sheppard."

With this, he mounted his steed and rode off.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW JACK SHEPPARD BROKE OUT OF THE CAGE AT WILLESDEN.

The heart-piercing scream uttered by Mrs. Sheppard after the commission of the robbery in Willesden church, was productive of unfortunate consequences to her son. Luckily she was bereft of consciousness, and was thus spared the additional misery of witnessing what afterwards befell him. Startled by the cry, as may be supposed, the attention of the whole congregation was drawn towards the quarter whence it proceeded. Amongst others, a person near the door, roused by the shriek, observed a man make his exit with the utmost precipitation. A boy attempted to follow; but, as the suspicions of the lookers-on were roused, by the previous circumstances, the younger fugitive was seized and detained. Meanwhile, Mr. Kneebone, having been alarmed by something in the widow's look before her feelings found vent in the manner above described, thrust his hand instinctively into his coat in search of his pocket-book—about the security of which, as it contained several letters and documents implicating himself and others in the Jacobite plot, he was, not unnaturally, solicitous—and, finding it gone, he felt certain he had been robbed. Turning quickly round, in the hope of discovering the thief, he was no less surprised than distressed—for, in spite of his faults, the woolen-draper was a good-natured fellow—to perceive Jack Sheppard in custody. The truth at once flashed across his mind. This, then, was the cause of the widow's wild inexplicable look —of her sudden shriek! Explaining his suspicions in a

whisper to Jack's captor, who proved to be a churchwarden and a constable, by name John Dump—Mr. Kneebone begged him to take the prisoner into the churchyard. Dump instantly complied, and as soon as Jack was removed from the sacred edifice, his person was searched from head to foot—but without success. Jack submitted to this scrutiny with a very bad grace, and vehemently protested his innocence. In vain did the woolen-draper offer to set him free if he would restore the stolen article, or give up his associate, to whom it was supposed he might have handed it. He answered with the greatest assurance, that he knew nothing whatever of the matter —had seen no pocket-book, and no associate to give up. Nor did he content himself with declaring his guiltlessness of the crime imputed to him, but began in his turn to menace his captor and accuser, loading the latter with the bitterest upbraidings. By this time, the churchyard was crowded with spectators, some of whom dispersed in different directions in quest of the other robber. But all that could be ascertained in the village was, that a man had ridden off a short time before in the direction of London. Of this man Kneebone resolved to go in pursuit; and leaving Jack in charge of the constable, he proceeded to the small inn—which bore then, as it bears now, the name of the Six Bells—where, summoning the hostler, his steed was instantly brought him, and, springing on its back, he rode away at full speed.

Meanwhile, after a consultation between Mr. Dump and the village authorities, it was agreed to lock up the prisoner in the cage. As he was conveyed thither, an incident occurred that produced a considerable impression on the feelings of the youthful offender. Just as they reached the eastern outlet of the churchyard—where the tall elms cast a pleasant shade over the rustic graves—a momentary stoppage took place. At this gate two paths

met. Down that on the right the young culprit was dragged—along that on the left a fainting woman was borne in the arms of several females. It was his mother, and, as he gazed on her pallid features and motionless frame, Jack's heart severely smote him. He urged his conductors to a quicker pace to get out of sight of the distressing spectacle, and even felt relieved when he was shut out from it and the execrations of the mob by the walls of the little prison.

The cage at Willesden was, and is—for it is still standing—a small round building about eight feet high, with a pointed tiled roof, to which a number of boards, inscribed with the names of the parish officers, and charged with a multitude of admonitory notices to vagrants and other disorderly persons, are attached. Over these boards the two arms of a guide-post serve to direct the wayfarer—on the right hand to the neighboring villages of Neasdon and Kingsbury, and on the left to the Edgeware Road, and the healthy heights of Hampstead. The cage has a strong door, with an iron grating at the top, and further secured by a stout bolt and padlock. It is picturesquely situated beneath a tree on the high-road, not far from the little hostel before mentioned, and at no great distance from the church.

For some time after he was locked up in this prison, Jack continued in a very dejected state. Deserted by his older companion in iniquity, and instigator to crime, he did not know what might become of him; nor, as we have observed, was the sad spectacle he had just witnessed, without effect. Though within the last two days he had committed several heinous offenses, and one of a darker dye than any with which the reader has been made acquainted, his breast was not yet so callous as to be wholly insensible to the stings of conscience. Wearied at length with thinking on the past, and ter-

rified by the prospect of the future, he threw himself on the straw with which the cage was littered, and endeavored to compose himself to slumber. When he awoke, it was late in the day; but though he heard voices outside, and now and then caught a glimpse of a face peeping at him through the iron grating over the door, no one entered the prison, or held any communication with him. Feeling rather exhausted, it occurred to him that possibly some provisions might have been left by the constable; and looking about, he perceived a pitcher of water and a small brown loaf on the floor. He ate of the bread with great appetite, and having drunk as much as he chose of the water, poured the rest on the floor. His hunger satisfied, his spirits began to revive, and with this change of mood all his natural audacity returned. And here he was first visited by that genius which, in his subsequent career, prompted him to so many bold and successful attempts. Glancing around his prison, he began to think it possible he might effect an escape from it. The door was too strong, and too well secured, to break open—the walls too thick; but the ceiling—if he could reach it—there, he doubted not, he could make an outlet. While he was meditating flight in this way, and tossing about on the straw, he chanced upon an old broken and rusty fork. Here was an instrument which might be of the greatest service to him in accomplishing his design. He put it carefully aside, resolved to defer the attempt till night. Time wore on somewhat slowly with the prisoner, who had to control his impatience in the best way he could; but as the shades of evening were darkening, the door was unlocked, and Mr. Dump popped his head into the cage. He brought another small loaf, and a can with which he replenished the pitcher, recommending Jack to be careful, as he would get nothing further till morning. To this Jack replied, that he should be perfectly con-

tented, provided he might have a small allowance of gin. The latter request, though treated with supreme contempt by Mr. Dump, made an impression on some one outside; for not long after the constable departed, Jack heard a tap at the door, and getting up at the summons, he perceived the tube of a pipe inserted between the bars. At once divining the meaning of this ingenious device, he applied his mouth to the tube, and sucked away, while the person outside poured spirit into the bowl. Having drunk as much as he thought prudent, and thanked his unknown friend for his attention, Jack again lay down on the straw, and indulged himself with another nap, intending to get up as soon as it was perfectly dark. The strong potation he had taken, combined with the fatigue and anxiety he had previously undergone, made him oversleep himself, and when he awoke it was just beginning to grow light. Cursing himself for his inertness, Jack soon shook off his drowsiness, and set to work in earnest. Availing himself of certain inequalities in the door, he soon managed to climb up to the roof; and, securing his feet against a slight projection in the wall, began to use the fork with great effect. Before many minutes elapsed, he had picked a large hole in the plaster, which showered down in a cloud of dust; and breaking off several laths, caught hold of a beam, by which he held with one hand, until with the other he succeeded, not without some difficulty, in forcing out one of the tiles. The rest was easy. In a few minutes more he had made a breach in the roof wide enough to allow him to pass through. Emerging from this aperture, he was about to descend, when he was alarmed by hearing the tramp of horses' feet swiftly approaching, and had only time to hide himself behind one of the largest signboards before alluded to, when two horsemen rode up. Instead of passing on, as Jack expected, these persons stopped opposite the cage, when

one of them, as he judged from the sound, for he did not dare to look out of his hiding-place, dismounted. A noise was next heard, as if some instrument were applied to the door with the intent to force it open, and Jack's fears were at once dispelled. At first, he had imagined they were officers of justice, come to convey him to a stronger prison; but the voice of one of the parties, which he recognized, convinced him they were his friends.

"Look quick, Blueskin, and be cursed to you!" was growled in the deep tones of Jonathan Wild. "We shall have the whole village upon us while you're striking the jigger. Use the gilt, man!"

"There's no need of picklock or crowbar here, Mr. Wild," cried Jack, placing his hat on the right arm of the guide-post, and leaning over the board, "I've done the trick myself."

"Why, what the devil's this!" vociferated Jonathan, looking up. "Have you broken out of the cage, Jack?"

"Something like it," replied the lad, carelessly.

"Bravo!" cried the thief-taker, approvingly.

"Well, that beats all I ever heard of!" roared Blueskin.

"But are you really there?"

"No, I'm here," answered Jack, leaping down. "I tell you what, Mr. Wild," he added, laughing, "it must be a stronger prison than Willesden cage that can hold me."

"Ay, ay," observed Jonathan, "you'll give the keepers of his Majesty's jails some trouble before you're many years older, I'll warrant you. But, get up behind Blueskin. Some one may observe us."

"Come, jump up," cried Blueskin, mounting his steed, "and I'll soon whisk you to town. Edgeworth Bess and Poll Maggot are dying to see you. I thought Bess would have cried her pretty eyes out when she heard you

was nabbed. You need give yourself no more concern about Kneebone. Mr. Wild has done his business."

"Ay—ay," laughed Jonathan. "The pocket-book you prigged contained the letters I wanted. He's now in spring-ankle warehouse with Sir Rowland Trenchard. So get up, and let's be off."

"Before I leave this place, I must see my mother."

"Nonsense," returned Jonathan, gruffly. "Would you expose yourself to fresh risk? If it hadn't been for her you wouldn't have been placed in your late jeopardy."

"I don't care for that," replied Jack. "See her I *will*. Leave me behind: I'm not afraid. I'll be at the Cross Shovels in the course of the day."

"Nay, if you're bent upon this folly," observed Wild, who appeared to have his own reasons for humoring the lad, "I sha'n't hinder you. Blueskin will take care of the horses, and I'll go with you."

So saying, he dismounted; and flinging his bridle to his companion, and ordering him to ride off to a little distance, he followed Jack, who had quitted the main road, and struck into a narrow path opposite the cage. This path, bordered on each side by high privet hedges of the most beautiful green, soon brought them to a stile.

"There's the house," said Jack, pointing to a pretty cottage, the small wooden porch of which was covered with roses and creepers, with a little trim garden in front of it. "I'll be back in a minute."

"Don't hurry yourself," said Jonathan, "I'll wait for you here.

CHAPTER XIX.

GOOD AND EVIL.

As Jack opened the gate, and crossed the little garden, which exhibited in every part the neatness and attention of its owner, he almost trembled at the idea of further disturbing her peace of mind. Pausing with the intention of turning back, he glanced in the direction of the village church, the tower of which could just be seen through the trees. The rooks were cawing amid the boughs, and all nature appeared awaking to happiness. From this peaceful scene Jack's eye fell upon Jonathan, who, seated upon the stile, under the shade of an elder-tree, was evidently watching him. A sarcastic smile seemed to play upon the thief-taker's lips; and, abashed at his own irresolution, the lad went on.

After knocking for some time at the door without effect, he tried the latch, and to his surprise found it open. He stepped in with a heavy foreboding of calamity. A cat came and rubbed herself against him as he entered the house, and seemed by her mewing to ask him for food. That was the only sound he heard.

Jack was almost afraid of speaking; but at length he summoned courage to call out "Mother!"

"Who's there?" asked a faint voice from the bed.

"Your son," answered the boy.

"Jack!" exclaimed the widow, starting up and drawing back the curtain. "Is it indeed you, or am I dreaming?"

"You're not dreaming, mother," he answered. "I'm come to say good-by to you, and to assure you of my safety before I leave this place."

"Where are you going?" asked his mother.

"I hardly know," returned Jack; "but it's not safe for me to remain much longer here."

"True," replied the widow, upon whom all the terrible recollections of the day before crowded, "I know it isn't. I won't keep you long. But, tell me, how have you escaped from the confinement in which you were placed—come and sit by me—here—upon the bed—give me your hand—and tell me all about it."

Her son complied, and sat down upon the patchwork coverlet beside her.

"Jack," said Mrs. Sheppard, clasping him with a hand that burnt with fever, "I have been ill—dreadfully ill—I believe delirious—I thought I should have died last night—I won't tell you what agony you have caused me—I won't reproach you. Only promise me to amend—to quit your vile companions—and I will forgive you—will bless you. Oh! my dear, dear son, be warned in time. You are in the hands of a wicked, a terrible man, who will not stop till he has completed your destruction. Listen to your mother's prayers, and do not let her die broken-hearted."

"It is too late," returned Jack, sullenly; "I can't be honest, if I would."

"Oh! do not say so," replied his wretched parent. "It is never too late. I know you are in Jonathan Wild's power, for I saw him near you in the church; and if ever the enemy of mankind was permitted to take human form, I beheld him then. Beware of him, my son! Beware of him! You know not what villainy he is capable of. Be honest, and you will be happy. You are yet a child; and though you have strayed from the right path, a stronger hand than your own has led you thence. Return, I implore of you, to your master—to Mr. Wood. Acknowledge your faults. He is all kindness, and will

overlook them for your poor father's sake—for mine. Return to him, I say——"

"I can't," replied Jack, doggedly.

"Can't!" repeated his mother. "Why not?"

"*I'll* tell you," cried a deep voice from the back of the bed. And immediately afterwards the curtain was drawn aside, and disclosed the satanic countenance of Jonathan Wild, who had crept into the house unperceived. "I'll tell you, why he can't go back to his master," cried the thief-taker, with a malignant grin. "He has robbed him."

"Robbed him!" screamed the widow. "Jack!"

Her son averted his gaze.

"Ay, robbed him," reiterated Jonathan. "The night before last, Mr. Wood's house was broken into and plundered. Your son was seen by the carpenter's wife in company with the robbers. Here," he added, throwing a handbill on the bed, "are the particulars of the burglary, with the reward for Jack's apprehension."

"Ah!" ejaculated the widow, hiding her face.

"Come," said Wild, turning authoritatively to Jack—"you have overstayed your time."

"Do not go with him, Jack!" shrieked his mother. "Do not—do not!"

"He *must!*" thundered Jonathan, "or he goes to jail."

"If you must go to prison, I will go with you," cried Mrs. Sheppard: "but avoid that man as you would a serpent."

"Come along," thundered Jonathan.

"Hear me, Jack!" shrieked his mother. "You know not what you do. The wretch you confide in has sworn to hang you. As I hope for mercy, I speak the truth!—let him deny it if he can."

"Pshaw!" said Wild. "I could hang him now if I liked. But he may remain with you, if he pleases: *I* sha'n't hinder him."

"You hear, my son," said the widow eagerly. "Choose between good and evil—between him and me. And mind, your life—more than your life—hangs upon your choice."

"It does so," said Wild. "Choose, Jack."

The lad made no answer, but left the room.

"He is gone!" cried Mrs. Sheppard, despairingly.

"Forever!" said the thief-taker, preparing to follow.

"Devil!" cried the widow, catching his arm, and gazing with frantic eagerness in his face, "how many years will you give my son before you execute your terrible threat?"

"NINE!" answered Jonathan, sternly.

END OF VOLUME ONE.

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